

The Lord's Prayer

AND

OTHER SERMONS

Woodworth

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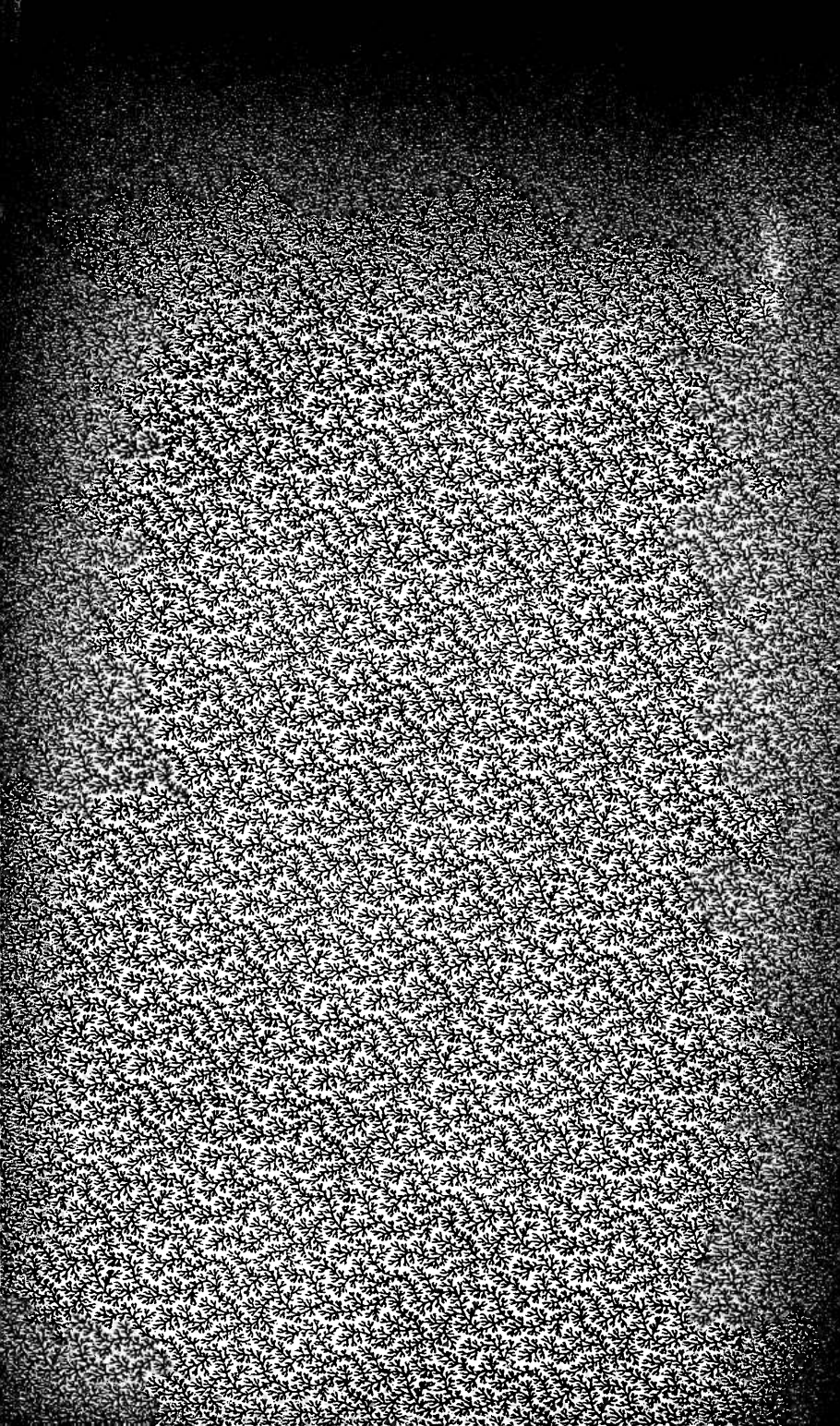
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THE LORD'S PRAYER

AND

OTHER SERMONS



Mr. W. Woodworth

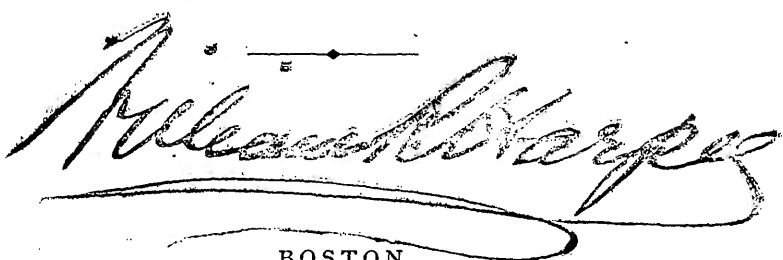
THE
GRAND
CHICAGO
LORD'S PRAYER

AND

OTHER SERMONS

BY

W. W. WOODWORTH, D.D.

A large, flowing handwritten signature in dark ink, likely of William W. Woodworth, spanning across the middle of the page.

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WILLIAM WALTER WOODWORTH.

BORN IN CROMWELL, CONN., OCTOBER 16, 1813.

DIED IN BERLIN, CONN., JUNE 14, 1890.

IT is eminently fitting that the sermons of this memorial volume should be introduced by words of reminiscence and tribute. Though it falls to one friend to offer these prefatory words, the writer is quite sure of the companionship of the many friends of Dr. Woodworth, as we talk one with another of what he was and what he did.

Nor is it inappropriate that these words should be written in the Commonwealth to which he gave thirty of the years of his faithful stewardship, and in the neighborhood of the church which was honored in an unusual degree with the ten years which opened and the fourteen years which closed this ministry. We may well drop the qualifying word from the familiar "*Forsitan hæc olim meminisse juvabit*;" for in the ongoing years there can be no "perchance" in the pleasure of remembering these former things of our friend. Dr. Woodworth's life is an inspiration because of several conspicuous things.

First of all, we remember him in his entire familiarity and reverent freedom with the Word of God. This familiarity and freedom grew out of a patient and painstaking study of the Bible in its original sources. He cultivated the habit of seek-

ing for the truth in revelation at first hand. No English rendering, were it ever so accurate, could be a substitute for a careful searching out of the first meanings of Scripture.

His friends were so accustomed to this thoroughness that they took it for granted. They saw with a glad inspiration that no other handling of the Bible was possible for this careful and conscientious student.

It was no surprise, then, to find Dr. Woodworth giving a hearty welcome to the Revised Version. He recognized its defects, but he gave it a place in his pulpit because he felt that its rendering was on the whole a step nearer the original, and so far nearer to the truth which he was commissioned to teach.

But this purpose to get at the heart of the Scriptures was not simply an exercise in critical scholarship. It had ever a practical purpose. He had men in mind, — men whose faith must rest on Scripture rightly interpreted. Hence he sought to draw from the original source and bring forth the truth as pure as might be; for Christian life meant to him life built upon and built up in biblical truth.

That expository preaching should have had a large place in his ministry was most natural.

These studies in the Lord's Prayer which follow are for this reason a preëminently fitting memorial, for that the disclosure of the treasures of the Scriptures was his dear occupation during his earthly ministry. No other tribute would he have asked for than to be remembered by these prayerful and thoughtful searchings into the hidden but not undiscoverable things of God.

A second trait in Dr. Woodworth's character, a boon companion of the first, was his wide reading in any and every book which would illumine the Word and confirm his faith in it. Sometimes it was a book which came to the defence

of Scripture with weapons which were not carnal, but mighty through God for the faith "once delivered to the saints." Again it was a book which acted as a tonic for his faith by the very vigor with which it assailed the Word. At other times it was a book which opened up interpretations of truth which were to this lover of truth new, and to his open mind not yet within the door. But to each alike he brought a true and honest heart. To the friendly book he was ever hospitable. To the unfriendly he was ever fair. Toward the one of whose interpretation of the Scriptures he was not quite sure he was unsuspicious, ready to know it better, yet withal cautious about adopting it as one of his own.

It was this catholic spirit toward all books which had to do with the Bible and its truths which was a striking feature as the years of Dr. Woodworth's life grew apace. Of one such book, among the very last in his reading, after expressing his dissent from some of its teachings, he added with native candor, "Still it is a great book." There was a natural kinship in this deep love of the Scriptures and this no less strong friendship with books. It was the very unfoldings of the truth in the study of the Word which made Dr. Woodworth eager to supply the demands of a mind so enriched.

But this wide reading of books, like his deep searching of the Scriptures, centred in the same sacred purpose, namely, the reaching of men. The spirit of revivals was the halo round about the Christian scholarship of this student of the Word. The results of his study and reading he laid ever on the altar, as a willing offering to the God whom he found wherever he read, and whose Word he studied that he might bring men to Him.

Sometimes it seemed as though Dr. Woodworth was over-cautious in bringing into the pulpit the full results of his reading. Possibly the impressions from his preaching might

have been deeper if he had spoken more freely of the things which he had discovered in his searchings for the truth. He was an explorer, brave and reverent, and found much in his journeyings. It seemed as though his pulpit teachings would have been even more impressive, and possibly more widely appreciated, had they been more frequently enriched by these discoveries of this candid and cautious mind.

In his reading and thinking, Dr. Woodworth was abreast with the times. None more ready to accept of that which was new, if only it were true. None more ready to reject that which was put before him as true, simply because it was new. He belonged to this generation. He thought with it, read with it, was ever proud to claim his place in it. He loved his favorite study of the Scriptures, because of the brighter light which this generation shed upon it. He loved, too, the books of the last decades of this century because, as champions or foes, they magnified the Bible for him as the unalterable Word of God.

Out of these two traits of character the others grew quite naturally. That such a life should be conspicuous for its consecration is what we should look for.

As we remember what that consecration was in the coronation of the Christ whose spirit was so really incarnate in the life of this godly man, a reverent silence is befitting. The memory of it stirs within one the spirit of worship with shoes removed and head uncovered.

To say that Dr. Woodworth had ever a deep affection for the brotherhood of the ministry, that he was always alive to the worth of the fellowship of the churches, that he was ever ready to adopt new methods in parish work, always eager to learn from those who looked up to him as to a father, methodical and faithful in all details, scrupulously careful in keeping his appointments — to say these things is but to fill in here

and there the outline of this character of which this reminiscence is but a sketch. There is as little need of speaking of these things as there was for Elisha to talk with the sons of the prophets concerning the departure of his master. The many friends of Dr. Woodworth answer with the prophet, "I know it: hold ye your peace."

It is to his words we are to listen while we go with him as our guide through these studies in the Word. The realized wish of his recorded words will be our best tribute to his life: "So may we do our part as to hasten the coming of that day, the dawn of which already reddens the eastern sky, when the brotherhood of the Church shall be coextensive with the brotherhood of man."

ALFRED H. HALL.

PARSONAGE, CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
MERIDEN, CONN.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

WILLIAM WALTER WOODWORTH was born in Middletown Upper Houses, now called Cromwell, Conn., Oct. 16, 1813. He was the third in a family of six children. His father, Walter Woodworth, of Lebanon, Conn., died in Fayetteville, N. C., where he was teaching, in 1822, at the age of thirty-seven. Walter Woodworth's wife, who survived him forty-two years, was Mary Sage, daughter of Elisha Sage, of Welsh descent and a Revolutionary soldier, and Mary Montague, daughter of John Montague, of Wethersfield, Conn., a large woman physically, strong in mind and character. Her characteristics reappeared in her children. But nine years old when his father died, William Woodworth knew little home life. Many of his early years were passed as a farmer's boy with his uncle, Miles Merwin, of Durham, Conn. His love for books was early manifested, and on training days and other holidays, instead of joining the boys in going to the gatherings, his time was spent with such books as he could obtain. When about sixteen, he became apprentice to a watchmaker and jeweller in Bridgeport. It was here that he became a Christian, during the revivals of 1831. Not long after, laid aside from his work for a time by being run over, in the days of quiet thoughtfulness he resolved to give up his trade and consecrate himself to the work of the ministry. He was then eighteen. Studying by himself, and at a school in Middletown kept by his uncle, Mr. Garfield, he fitted for college, entering Yale in 1834 and graduating in 1838. His theological studies were at Andover and Yale. Nearly one-half of the time included in his college and seminary course he was obliged to use to earn funds by teaching, but he retained good rank in his class and graduated honorably. Part of his teaching was at

Westfield Academy, where he left deep impress on many of his pupils. He was licensed to preach June 10, 1840, by the Hampden Association, at Blandford, Mass. He became pastor of the Second Church in Berlin, then called Worthington Society, and was ordained July 6, 1842. His pastorate continued until May 2, 1852. Its impression on the people was deep,—so deep that it was largely influential in recalling him nearly a quarter of a century afterward,—and so strong upon him that his thoughts reverted to it again and again, and with oft-expressed longing that his ministry might end where it began; and God granted him the desire of his heart. He married, Oct. 26, 1842, at Stockbridge, Mass., Miss Lucy Atwater, daughter of Dr. William Atwater, of Westfield. She died July 4, 1844, the day after her only son was born. Mr. Woodworth married Oct. 9, 1845, Miss Sarah U. Goodrich, daughter of Rev. Charles A. Goodrich, of Berlin. Three children were born to them in Berlin, one of whom lived but a short time. It was during these years in Berlin that, in consequence of his pronounced attitude against intemperance, the church was set on fire and his life threatened. The Sabbath following he preached from the text, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," and with overwhelming effect. Revivals marked all his pastorates, at Berlin and elsewhere. Resigning his pastorate in Berlin partly because of inadequacy of salary, though he felt that the church could not then wisely attempt to pay him more, he was dismissed May 2, 1852, and became pastor of the First Church in Waterbury Sept. 29, 1852, where he won the hearts of the people strongly, gathering in many souls, and leaving lasting and loving impressions. Three children were born here. One son died in 1854, at the age of eight, and his wife died at her father's home in Hartford, March 11, 1858. His pastorate closed May 2, 1858, and a few days later his youngest son, less than a year old, died. For eight years thereafter he ministered to several churches for brief periods,—Mansfield, Ohio, '58-'60; Olivet Church, Springfield, Mass., '60-'62; Plymouth, Mass., '62-'64; Painesville, Ohio, '64-'66. Here he met Miss Lydia A. Sessions, Principal of Lake Erie Female Seminary, daughter of William V. Sessions, Esq., of Hampden, Mass., whom he married April 11, 1866. May 16 of that year he was installed pastor of the church in Belchertown, Mass., where he had a

pleasant and profitable pastoral experience. Two sons were born in Belchertown, the older dying when a little less than a year and a half old. Always drawn strongly toward the West, with its vigorous life, he accepted a call to Grinnell, Iowa, in 1870, and in that large and widely influential sphere he labored successfully until the autumn of 1875, when a call to his old first-love, Berlin, coming when he felt that the burden of so important and growing and difficult a parish as Grinnell might soon, with his increasing years, be too great for him, led him to resign his pastorate there, and he was regretfully dismissed Nov. 28, 1875. Two sons were born in Grinnell. On the 6th of January, 1876, his second Berlin pastorate began by his installation, and in that he continued until "he was not, for God took him." A runaway accident played some part in his entering the ministry, and it was through a runaway accident, in which he was thrown from his carriage June 12, that he received the injuries which resulted in his death June 14, 1890, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, and four days more than fifty years after his licensure to preach the gospel.

I.

MATTHEW vi. 7, 8.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him."

HERE is a precious truth. Our Father knoweth what things we need. We do not always know. We never fully know. We sometimes think we need things which, if we had them, would harm or ruin us. But our Father cannot mistake. He knows both what we wish and what we need, and that what we wish is not always what we need, but often just the opposite. But we are apt to ask, if we ask at all, for what we wish, and our Father, knowing that this is not what we need, withholds it, and grants us instead, what will meet our deepest necessities. We rejoice that this is so, and that our Father, knowing the nature and tendency of every gift, will give to those that ask him only *good things*.

Some, from the fact that God knows what things we have need of before we ask him, infer that it is of no use to ask him for anything. "If God is our Father," they say, "and knows that his children need this or that, will he not give it to us without our asking? and if we do not need it, will he give it for our asking? In either case, what is the use of praying?" I have often been met with just this reasoning. Let us spend a little time in examining it.

I. Observe that the Saviour draws no such inference. He

does not say, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him; therefore you need not ask him." But he says, "Your Father knoweth . . . after this manner *therefore pray ye.*" Your Father knoweth your needs, therefore pray; pray in a certain manner; but by no means stop praying. And, in another part of this same Sermon on the Mount, he says, "Ask, and it shall be given you. Every one that asketh receiveth. If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Observe he says "*to them that ask him.*" He knows you need these good things; but it is his will that you should ask for them; and his plan to give the *best things only* to those who ask. Did Jesus know? Is he the world's great Teacher? Then no inference against the usefulness of prayer can be fairly drawn from the fact that our Father knows all our wants.

1. *Prayer is the natural impulse of man in need.* This word "natural" has two senses, both legitimate and proper; but one much deeper than the other. Thus, we say it is natural for man to sin, to depart from God. This is true of man as fallen, and corrupted by sin. But in a far deeper sense all sin is most unnatural. "He that sinneth wrongeth his own soul." Man was made for holiness, and not for sin; for communion with God, and not for alienation from God. He does violence to his nature in the deepest and truest sense every time he sins. His life of alienation from God is a long and constant warfare against his own nature. Man's true nature is seen in his *conscience*, that urges to duty; in his *reason*, which shows him the boundless folly of his sins; in his *affections*, which cannot rest without God. He has in him two natures, contrary the one to the other. "If," says Pascal, "man was not made for God, why can he not be blessed without God? If he was made for God, why is he so opposed to God?" But we say, "Though so opposed to God, he was made for God. His nature, in the truest sense, demands God."

So there is a sense in which it is natural for men to live without prayer, and to urge all the excuses they can find or

invent, for not praying. We see this everywhere and every day. But, after all, this is a constant violence to nature, in the deepest sense of that word. There are times when nature, in this true sense, speaks out, declaring what its deepest tendencies are. In great difficulties, or sudden dangers, man spontaneously betakes himself to prayer. On the deck of the shattered vessel, amid the dashing waves, he *cries* to God for help. He may be an atheist, denying the very being of God. He may be one of those who have reasoned against prayer, and many times proved to their own satisfaction that it is useless to pray. But in this moment of supreme danger, nature brushes away his cobweb reasonings, and drives him to God for help. *How he prays now!* Why? Has he forgotten that God knows what things he has need of before he asks? He knows that now, as well as he did when he found in it an excuse for living without prayer. But he feels now that this fact, certain as it is, furnishes no argument against prayer. Nature has risen in its might, and swept away the reasonings of ungodliness. When the danger is over, ungodliness may resume its sway, and its reasonings again seem valid; but they will not answer for this hour.

The experience of every regenerated man testifies to the same truth. Regeneration is not a change from the natural and normal to the unnatural and abnormal, but the reverse. The regenerate state is the natural and normal one, not the unregenerate. The Spirit of God in this change restores a man to the condition for which he was made. His selfish, sinful, ungodly state, has been fearfully unnatural and abnormal; his new state, into which the regenerating Spirit has brought him, is natural and normal. Now this new state is characterized by prayer.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air."

And, unlike the prayer extorted from an ungodly man in a moment of supreme peril, prayer becomes the habit and the delight of the regenerate man. His life is a life of prayer. "Only while he prays he lives." How is this? Has he forgotten the fact under which, in his old, unregenerate state, he

used to shelter himself, when urged by conscience, or by the exhortations of Christians, or by the Holy Spirit to pray? Has he forgotten that his Father knoweth what things he has need of before he asks? No! far from that. But he knows that this argument which he used to urge, was but the subterfuge of ungodliness.

2. *Observe that prayer is the fitting expression of our relations to God and our dependence on God.* God is our Father. We may have become unnatural children — still he is our Father, and he loves to have us speak to him of our desires and our wants. If we have not the heart of children, he has the heart of a father, and he longs for communion with his children. Hence he says to us, — “If you want anything, especially if you want the richest blessings, ask for them.” Is not this reasonable on his part? Is it reasonable on our part, to reply, “Father, it is of no kind of use for us to ask; for you know just what we need without our asking?” His demand for prayer is a most fatherly act. But what can be more unfilial than our reply? It means that we do not desire to have anything to do with *him*, we only want *his gifts*. If he will only give us these, we shall be glad to be free from the necessity of speaking to him from one year’s end to another. He does not call for prayer in order to be informed of our wants; but he calls for it to keep up continually the intercourse between him, the Father, and us, the children. It is natural and fitting that this intercourse should be kept up. The virtue, the safety, the blessedness of the children depend on keeping it up. Hence, to secure the constancy of this intercourse, he establishes this as a law, “Ask, and it shall be given you.” I do not regard this as a law for man only. I think, from the nature of the relation which God sustains to his moral kingdom, it must be a law for all; for every world where his children dwell — for heaven as well as for earth, for angels as well as for men; and this law, full of beneficence, full of fatherly kindness, is one of the strong cords which bind his great family to him. The whole universe depends on him for blessings, and it is fitting that all intelligent creatures should express that dependence by prayer, before blessings come; and by thanksgiving after the blessings are

received. This is the proper expression of dependence ; and that is a most unnatural child who wishes to enjoy the gifts, and to make no such acknowledgment.

3. *Observe that prayer fits us to receive the gift.* The Bible says nothing about this reaction of prayer on the character of him that prays. It simply lays down the rule, " Ask and it shall be given you ;" and illustrates and enforces it by precept, by promise, by example, in every way in which such a rule can be illustrated and enforced. No small portion of the Bible is devoted to this subject of prayer. And everywhere the principle is, " Pray, and you will receive in answer to prayer blessings of infinite value, which you would not receive, if you did not pray." Now does this, which certainly is the one Bible view of prayer, leave any room for the doctrine that prayer itself so reacts on the heart as to fit us for the reception of blessings? I think it does. The fact that prayer does fit us to receive blessings may be one of the reasons why God established the rule, " Ask, and I will give you." But he does not give this to us as one of the reasons why we should pray. The one reason for prayer which he gives us is, that he will give us blessings in answer to prayer. If we consider a moment, we see the wisdom of this. I cannot truly *pray*, if my thoughts are directed to the effect which I am aiming to produce on myself. Prayer is asking ; but I am not asking, I am trying to work on myself, I am engaged in a sort of spiritual gymnastics. I am not praying, I am trying to fit myself to receive a blessing, not trying to prevail with God to give me the blessing. This may be a proper thing to do, but it is not prayer ; and if I call it so, I deceive myself, and the whole performance is a fraud, a falsehood, instead of a sublime reality. It does not elevate me ; it debases me. But if I ask that I may receive, then I draw near to God. I am not now trying to act on myself, to lift myself towards God by tugging at my own heart. I am coming into the presence of God ; I am lifting myself by reaching upward to him ; I am acknowledging my dependence on God and deepening it ; I am laying in my soul the foundation of gratitude when the blessing comes ; I am here in the presence of God, where faith and love strengthen, and humility deepens,

and where my soul catches the beams of his holiness and is changed into his image. It now becomes a different thing for God to give me what I ask for, than it would be to give me the same thing, if I did not ask. It is a safer thing, safer for me. If I had received this thing without asking, I might have gone off with it, into deeper alienation from God. But now I receive it with gratitude and with humility; and it binds my heart to him, the Giver. So my prayer, by being a genuine prayer, has fitted me to receive the gift; but it would not have so fitted me, if it had been only an attempt, under the name of prayer, to act on myself, and make myself better. So we see that this reflex influence of prayer, of which so much is said, can only be gained, when we ask that we may receive. Then it comes richly; fitting us to receive the gifts we ask for. Thus we see the wisdom of God in naming this as the one reason why we should pray, viz.: that we shall thus obtain blessings from him. We see, too, why he, as a wise and kind father, should, though he knows what things we need before we ask, yet make our asking the condition of his giving. This is a most benignant law, and he who disregards it, does so to his own infinite hurt.

II. But the Saviour does infer from the fact that our Father knoweth all our needs, that we should avoid vain repetitions and much speaking in prayer.

1. *Vain repetitions.* The one Greek word here translated "use vain repetitions," is defined in one of the lexicons, "to use empty words, to repeat the same thing over and over." You see that this definition presents two very different ideas. One might use "empty words," and not repeat them at all, or one might "repeat over and over" words fraught with the deepest meaning. Suppose we combine the two ideas, and define the word thus, "to repeat empty words over and over." Perhaps we thus come near the Master's meaning. Plainly, he does not mean to forbid all repetitions in prayer. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he himself, the Evangelist tells us, "went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." But these were not empty words. They bore an infinite burden. Paul, in regard to his thorn in the flesh, says, "For this thing, I besought the Lord thrice that it might

depart from me." But these were not empty words; they were fraught with the burden of an earnest spirit. This kind of repetition is not displeasing to God. The repetition he forbids, is that which repeats the same thing over and over, in the hope *by this repetition* to gain the favor of God, as if it were needful to make him understand our wants, or to call his attention to them, or as if, in deciding whether he should give us what we ask, he took account of the number of times we repeated the petition. This is to do as the heathen do. The prophets of Baal cried from morning till noon, "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!" Some of the Jewish Rabbis gave such maxims as these: "He who multiplies his prayers is sure of a hearing;" "Whoso lengthens his prayers shall not return empty;" "Every man should daily repeat at least eighteen prayers." A traveller says of the Moslems of the present day, "They are obliged to repeat some expressions thirty times; others, many hundred times." In the Romish Church there is the same superstition. So many "Ave Marias," so many "Pater noster" are prescribed; and the efficacy of the performance is made to depend on the number of the repetitions. Now, this is what the Saviour forbids. It is opposed to the spirit of the gospel. It makes a merit of *repeating* a prayer. It supposes that God counts the repetitions, and rewards us according to their number. But he looks rather at the spirit of our prayer. A petition, said over and over without faith and earnestness, has no influence with him, though it were said ten thousand times. If it is offered once, as a believing, humble, fervent prayer, and if it asks a thing you need — *a good thing* — it will not be offered in vain.

2. The Saviour teaches us to avoid *much speaking in prayer*. One of the early Christian fathers draws a distinction between much speaking and much praying. It is not the latter that Jesus forbids. He was an eminent example of it himself. He arose a great while before day, and departing to a desert place, there prayed. He went out to a mountain and continued all night in prayer to God. Here was *much praying*. So of Paul. He speaks of "night and day praying exceedingly." So of all the holiest and most successful of his followers. They were distinguished for much praying.

The *much speaking* that Jesus condemns is a different thing. There may be much speaking, professedly to God, and very eloquent speaking, too, when there is *no praying*. Dr. Thomas Scott remarks, "It is not uncommon for men to use most words when they have least meaning; and waste the time in repetitions, when the affections and perhaps the thoughts are otherwise employed." Many a long prayer, so called, is not a prayer at all. It speaks the words of prayer, but has not the spirit of prayer. There has been much speaking, but no praying. But men sometimes deceive themselves into the notion that there is some merit in this kind of speaking, especially if there is a great deal of it, and a great deal of eloquence in it, which will lay God under obligation to bless them for it. But let us remember that all such speaking is offensive to God. He sees both our hearts and our needs; and if our hearts ask for what our souls need, he gives the blessing whether our prayers be longer or shorter. Indeed, some of the most effective of all prayers are not spoken at all. They cannot be. They are groanings that cannot be uttered, desires awakened by the Holy Spirit, both irrepressible and inexpressible. They must have vent, but they cannot be told in words, and the full heart pours forth its mighty prayers in groans.

The text gives us the firmest ground of confidence in prayer. Consider the Saviour's well-chosen words, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." Put these two thoughts together, *Your Father—your needs*. Connect them with the word *knoweth*—*Your Father knoweth your needs*. Will not a *Father—the Father*, supply his children's *needs* which he *knows*? Does any one say here, again, "Yes, of course he will, whether we pray or not." Now, this inference as against prayer is perverse, and could only be drawn by one who does not love prayer. Suppose we apply the reasoning to other things. Man needs a supply of the fruits of the earth. God, his Father, knows that he needs them. But does any one reason thus, "God is kind, and loves me as his child. Therefore he will give me all the food and raiment and shelter I need, without my labor. Will a father let his children suffer and starve for lack of toil?" Suppose a man

should act on such reasoning, what would be the result? He would find to his cost that while God feeds his children, he does it by blessing their well-directed efforts. His law is, "Work, and eat, and have abundance."

It is equally his rule, "Ask and receive that your joy may be full." Yet, let me freely acknowledge that God has given us many gifts that we did not ask him for. He has given us the earth with all its beauties and its bounties; he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good — on the prayerless and the prayerful — he sendeth his rain on the fields of those who do not, as well as on the fields of those who do ask for it. Nor is this all. To meet the deepest needs of a sinning race, who had never thought of asking for such a blessing, he freely gave his only begotten Son, and threw open the gates of life to a world lost in sin. He thus, as a Father, supplies many of our wants without our asking; and still without our asking. He has made provision for the supply of *all* our wants, even those caused by our sin. What then; shall we infer that he will thus actually supply every want, whether we ask or not? Suppose he would. Would it not even then be our duty to ask, since he has *bid* us to ask? Would not the gifts be worth more to us, if we complied with his rule? Would we not be better children? But can he thus supply *all* our wants? We need pardon. He knows we need it. Can he give it to us without our asking? Are we fit to be pardoned, if we will not ask for it? He has opened the way of pardon for every one of us at an infinite cost, and this is as far as he can go until we are willing to ask. *Pardon us*, when we are too proud or too willful to ask! Why, we are as thoroughly alienated from him — as full of sin — as ever, until we consent to ask for pardon. Pardon to such a soul would not restore it to God, or to bliss. We need sanctifying grace. Our Father knows we need it. But his rule is to "give his Holy Spirit to them *that ask* him." And in what sort of moral position are we to receive the gift if we are too proud or too averse to God to ask for it? Can we be sanctified until we are willing to pray? So then the fact that our Father knows our needs is an encouragement, not to prayerlessness, but to prayer. He will supply my needs if I ask him, giving me, not perhaps

what I think I need, but what he knows I need. Here is my confidence in prayer ; God knows my needs, — needs which perhaps I have not dreamed of he knows, and he will hear the cry of me, his child, and do for me, when I pray, “exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think.”

II.

MATTHEW vi. 9.

“After this manner therefore, pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven.”

JESUS never attempted to solve the objections so easily raised against prayer from the omniscience, the self-moving goodness, and the immutable purposes of God, or from the invariable action of the laws of nature; but assuming that his disciples will pray, he gives them instructions as to the manner of prayer: “After this manner therefore pray ye.” “After this manner;” not always in these words, but always in this method, always in this spirit, and always for some or all of the things summed up in these brief sentences. I propose, in a series of discourses, to speak to you of the successive clauses of this prayer. To-day let us confine our thought to what has been styled “the preface to the Lord’s Prayer,” “Our Father who art in heaven.” In prayer let your first thought be that God is your Father, inspiring you with confidence; your second, blending with the first, that He is in heaven, far above you, inspiring you with reverence. We are thus taught that in prayer we should suitably recognize God’s paternal relation to us.

What, now, is such a recognition? We must *say*, “Our Father who art in heaven.” But these words might be spoken in mockery, and this were blasphemy. Or they might be spoken carelessly, and this were impiety. They must be the genuine expression of the views and dispositions of our souls.

1. We must realize that God has a father’s heart. Our Lord takes great pains to impress us with the fatherhood of God. The idea was not new. We find it in a few passages of the Old Testament. Moses had said, “Do ye thus requite

the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy father who hath bought thee?" David had said, "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father," and "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Isaiah had said, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou art our Father and our redeemer." God had said by his servant Malachi, "A son honoreth his father; if then I be a father, where is mine honor?" But the main teaching of that Testament is not of the fatherhood, but of the royalty of God. One of the chief purposes of God's dealings with the Hebrew people would seem to have been to impress upon them the thought that God is a king, the supreme ruler of the universe. The Saviour does not wish to efface this impression, but to blend with it, to engraft upon it the thought that this "great God and great King over all the earth" is also our Father; hence he repeats the endearing name, and teaches us to repeat it, till it becomes familiar to us. He perhaps says more precious things in this sermon on the Mount about God's paternal relation to us than had been said in the world before by all prophets and teachers, in all ages, and in all lands. What does he mean by it? Not simply that we owe our being to God, that he creates us, and supports us, and cares for us, but that he regards us with all a father's and a mother's love; for it takes both parents to represent God. Remove from the love of an earthly father and mother all impurity and all selfishness, and increase its intenseness till it becomes infinite, and you begin to grasp the mighty thought that Jesus meant to convey when he taught us to call God our Father. Let us not regard this language as figure, as metaphor. Nothing could be farther from the truth. God is the real Father. Man's parental love is but the faint image and shadow of the parental love of him who constituted the earthly relation partly that it might help us to conceive of his relation to us. When we pray, we must not feel that we are addressing a mighty being far away from us, who has no sympathy with our wants and our woes. We cannot indeed overrate his greatness, his majesty, his hatred of sin, or his wrath which sin enkindles. We vastly under-rate all this. But we must remember, also, his boundless love — his fatherly tenderness — how ready to forgive each re-

penitent child, and to answer each genuine prayer! We must keep before us that picture of our heavenly Father which Jesus has drawn in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The father looks and longs for the return of his wayward child, runs to meet him, freely forgives him, falls on his neck and kisses him. We must bear in mind at what an infinite cost to himself he has opened the way for our return and forgiveness. If we forget all this, we are repulsed from him by our own fear, and our sense of guilt. We regard him with suspicion and jealousy. We have no confidence in prayer. Oh, let us not forget that it is to the throne of grace and the Father of Mercies that we come; and that, in order to remove all our repelling dread, our Saviour teaches us to begin our prayers by saying, "Our Father."

2. But rightly to recognize God's paternal relation we *must also cherish the dispositions of children*. What insult to call him your Father, when you are destitute of the spirit of a child! Now, what are some of the dispositions that constitute the filial spirit? *Repentance* is one. I put this first, because the most impressive fact in our history as children is that we have been disobedient, undutiful children; and repentance is the first duty of a sinful child. If the parable of the Prodigal Son truly represents what are God's feelings towards us, it represents not less clearly what ought to be our feelings towards him. We must come to him, saying and feeling, "We have sinned against thee, and are no more worthy to be called thy children."

The good child also *loves* a good father; and if I call God my Father, my words imply this filial love. He bids me love him with all my heart, and with all my soul; and even in this command, broad and deep as it is, he does not require more than I know I ought to render to him: first, because he is my Father, and, secondly, because of the infinite loveliness of his character. How can I call him my Father if I do not cherish for him a filial love?

Trust also enters largely into the filial spirit. A little child trusts his father, believes all his father tells him. For does not his father know, and knowing would he deceive his children? So God's children trust him. They yield themselves

to his guidance, for they are sure that he can say nothing false and do nothing wrong. Thus, for all practical purposes, his wisdom and goodness and power become theirs; for is not their destiny decided and their conduct directed by his counsels? In this sense, too, they become by faith partakers of the divine nature. They are shortsighted; but if his wisdom directs them, it is the same to them as if that wisdom were theirs. They are feeble; but if his power blesses them, it is the same to them as if that power were theirs. All things are theirs, all that God has and all that God is.

Nearly allied with this trust is the *dependence* belonging to the filial spirit. The child, during his first years, is almost wholly dependent for everything on his parents. Hence the pitiable condition of an orphan, which finds its only alleviation when some other person supplies the lost parents' place. But what orphans were we without God! Life and all blessings — material and spiritual, temporal and eternal — come from him. And this dependence — so real and complete — we must feel. It is not enough that our creeds tell of it; our hearts must recognize it, or we do not rightly say "Our Father."

Reverence also enters largely into the filial spirit. We are commanded to honor our earthly parents. How much more, then, God? For he is no common father. We are to say "Our Father *who art in heaven.*" This may hint the boundless resources which he whose throne is in heaven has for the supply of his children's wants; and therefore that we need not limit our requests when we pray to him, as we must do, when we ask favors of an earthly parent. It may also intimate that the family home, whither all God's true children are going, is in heaven, where their Father is said to be. That is his home and ours. But it suggests also the immense distance between us and him. An earthly father is but little above his children. In a few years the infant of to-day may grow to more than the physical, intellectual, and spiritual stature of his parents. But we cannot thus grow up towards God. In the progress of our immortal being, we may rise till we reach and pass the position which the highest angel now occupies, nay, till we have passed the highest distinct conceptions we have ever yet formed of the greatness of God himself;

but even then we shall not have perceptibly lessened the distance between us and our Father in heaven. He will then seem to us farther above us than he does to-day. How fitting, then, the deepest reverence, blending with confidence and love, when we address such a Father! Now, this reverence in no degree lessens, but rather increases, the joy of communion with God. Ask those who walk most closely with God on earth, and they will tell you that never has his fatherly relation seemed so precious to them as when they have been most deeply impressed with his greatness and his holiness. Ask the worshippers in heaven, and they will tell you that their reverence for God is one of the richest elements of their blessedness. Standing on the sea of glass before the throne, they sing, "Who will not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art holy!" Oh, it is not needful in order to feel that God is our Father that we lose sight of his holiness and his majesty. Rather what joy, what confidence, does it inspire to realize the infinite greatness and glory and purity of him who is still a Father to us. Such, then, are some of the dispositions which enter into the filial spirit, *penitence, love, trust, dependence, reverence*. These are all implied when we call God our Father.

3. Still further, in order properly to recognize God's paternal relation, we must realize *the brotherhood of man*. The Great Teacher has been speaking of secret prayer; but he bids us when we pray to say "Our Father." Even when I enter my closet I am not to think of myself alone, or to regard God only as my Father. I belong, by virtue of my filial relation to God, to two brotherhoods; the brotherhood of the race of man, and the brotherhood of the church. I am never to lose sight of these brotherhoods. I am never to feel in prayer that I am an isolated being. The ties which bind me to God bind me also to my brothers of the church and my brothers of the race. Is he my Father? He is theirs also. Have I wants which he only can supply? So have they. Loving them as myself, I must intercede with their Father and mine that their wants, as well as my own, may be supplied. "Let the place and performance of secret prayer," says Leighton, "be as private as may be, but the strain and supplication

public as well as personal. The most private prayer of the godly is a public good, and he loses nothing by that; for besides that his particular interest is not hindered by taking in others, he hath this gain, that by the same reason, he likewise hath a share in all the prayers of others. And this is one point, and not a small one, of the communion of saints, that every believer hath a share in the prayers of all the rest; he is partner in every ship of that kind that sets to sea, and hath a portion in all their gainful voyages. Let not therefore any estate, no private perplexity, or distress, nor very sorrow for sin, take you so up as to be all for yourselves; let others find room with you." When thou prayest alone, *shut thy door*, says our Saviour here, — shut out as much as thou canst the sight and notice of others, but shut not out the interest and the good of others; say, *Our Father*.

What now are some of the advantages of thus recognizing God's fatherly relation to us in prayer?

1. *It must be pleasing to God.* It cannot please him to see us approach him with essentially wrong views and feelings in respect to him and his relations to us. If he be a Father, then the soul that bows before him as if he were the king of terrors, the tyrant, instead of the loving parent of men, must awaken in him a response, not of pity merely, but of displeasure also. So too if we come to him without the penitence, the love, the trust, the submission due to such a Father. But when we draw near in the filial spirit, crying, "Abba Father," then he welcomes and blesses us.

2. Such a recognition of God's paternal relation *must also inspire us with confidence in prayer.* The consciousness of guilt naturally fills us with distrust of God; and it requires all the scenes of Calvary, and all the invitations and promises of the gospel, to encourage us to come without misgiving to the throne of grace. Hence, Jesus taught us so earnestly and so often to regard God, the very God against whom we have sinned so fearfully, the very God we are so afraid of, as our Father. If there is anything which can remove our distrust of God, and inspire us with confidence in prayer, it is that Jesus, the Great Teacher, who perfectly knows the heart of God, himself the brightness of God's glory and the express

image of his person, has taken such pains to illustrate the great truth of the Fatherhood of God, and to make us familiar with the thought; and told us that God's feelings towards this sinful race find their fittest image in the parental instinct which he himself implanted within us, and in a father's yearning over a prodigal son; and that even this instinct and this yearning but feebly set forth God's affection for us. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!" Mark and weigh this "how much more." He has more than a father's love, much more — how much more no human words can tell — than a father's willingness and power to give good things. Who, then, will lack confidence in returning to God? Are you guilty? Still he is your Father, ready to forgive his penitent child. Are you oppressed with the feeling of unworthiness? Still he is your Father, waiting to bless you. Who, then, will come trembling with terror to *his throne of grace*? Who, when Jesus takes us by the hand to lead us up to God, and pointing to him as he sits "enthroned on the riches of the universe," says, "He is your Father, and loves you," will shrink fearfully away, saying, "After all, I doubt him. I am afraid to come near him. I do not believe he is willing to answer my prayers"?

3. Such a recognition of God's paternal relation must *encourage us in presenting all our requests before him*. Such is his greatness that, were I not assured to the contrary, I should fear that he might be unwilling to listen kindly to me, while again and again I ask him for this blessing and that, which, though a boon of great value to me, must seem so small an affair to his infinite mind. To all such doubts Jesus gives a sufficient answer when he bids us begin our prayers with the words "Our Father." A father does not think his child's wants too little for his notice. Let us remember, whatever our requests may be, that it is a father's ear that is to hear them, and a father's heart that is to decide upon them. A little later in this sermon the Saviour thus expands this answer, and reasons with our fears. "Ask, and it shall be given you. Every one that asketh receiveth. Is there one of you who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? or, if

he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Here is encouragement as great as I could wish, or God could give. What more could the most fearful desire? I learn that it is God's rule to give his children the things they ask for, with only the limitation that they be "*good things*." Would I have him give me any other but good things? Would I have him give me bad things, bad for me, bad in their influence on my welfare or the welfare of his kingdom, even if I do ask for them? If pleased with the beautiful colors and graceful motions of the poisonous serpent, I ask for that, would I have him give me that to my ruin? He is my Father, and will give me only what *he knows*, not what *I think, is good*.

In concluding this discourse, I remark: 1. No one ever rightly prays without something of the spirit of the child of God. Ministers are sometimes censured for teaching that the prayers of wicked men, so long as they have no purpose to forsake their wickedness, cannot be acceptable to God. But let us bring their prayers to the test furnished by this preface to the Lord's Prayer. I omit here the consideration of such passages as the following: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination;" "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, — yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear;" "Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them, because they behaved themselves ill in their doings." Passages like these, bearing their solemn, fearful import on their face, we pass by, and confine our attention to the necessary inference from the fact that we are bidden to begin our prayers with the words "Our Father." Suppose a man without the Christian spirit attempting to offer the Lord's Prayer. He might *say* it, and perhaps fancy that in so doing he was gaining some merit. But let him begin by impressing his heart with the meaning of his words. "Our Father who art in heaven." But what right have I to call God my Father? True, he created me, and gives me all things richly to enjoy. But do I show him, or even try

to show him, the reverence, the love, the submission due to such a Father? Am I not living in continual disregard of his commands; and if it were made certain to me that there is no such being as I now call my Father, would that fact make any void in my spirit, or any alteration in my plans, or in my purposes or manner of life? Should I grieve very deeply if this Father were dead? I call him, "Father;" but if his voice were to break the silence in which he enshrines himself, would he not reply, "A son honoreth his father; if, then, I be your Father, where is mine honor"?

My friends, I do believe that if the man who is living, and is willing still to live in sin, saw clearly the meaning of his words, he could not get beyond the very first words of the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. But why do I say this, and to whom? Not to him who, sensible of his guilt and weary of his wanderings, longs like the prodigal to return to his forsaken God. Not to him who, feeling his need of God's grace to fill him with the spirit of a child, wishes to ask God for the grace he needs. O, no! I would not cloud our Father's face with frowns to him who, knowing that he has acted unlike a son, desires to receive the forgiveness and sanctifying grace of God. Before him I would present God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. To him I would say, "There is love in God for you. Approach him. Fear not. Let your first word be 'Father,' and your next words, 'I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' Come to the Father by Jesus Christ. Receive him as your Saviour, and he will give you all the blessings of the sons of God. And not the least among those blessings will be the spirit of adoption, whereby you will cry, 'Abba, Father.'" But to those who have no such disposition I must say, "So long as you retain your present purposes, you cannot even begin to offer the Lord's Prayer, realizing the import and bearing of its first and most precious words."

2. The subject administers rebuke to those who seek no communion with God. Those rebukes are most keenly felt that are founded on the most precious truths. Here is such a rebuke. You see God as a Father inviting you to pray, and

crowning your days with goodness. How do you treat his invitations? What return do you make for his goodness? I do not charge you with immorality, but with ungodliness. I declare you to be ungrateful children, and that the best that can be said of you, when viewed in the highest and closest of all relations, is that you are indifferent to God, who is more than a father to you. When danger threatens or calamity crushes you, perhaps you start up in alarm, crying, "Father in heaven, save us!" But while your seas are smooth and your skies are sunny, and the fair breezes of prosperity fill your sails, you care nothing for him. O tell us not of your honesty and amiableness in proof that you are not sinners! There is such a thing as filial ingratitude and impiety, and you are guilty of it. You sometimes, perhaps, speak of the fatherhood of God, and infer that you have little to fear from him. I stop not here to inquire whether you can treat your great Father thus without incurring punishment the prospect of which should startle you. Let that pass for the present. But I affirm that, while refusing to pray to him, notwithstanding his commands and invitations, while neglecting to thank him for his countless benefits, you are manifesting a filial impiety which ought to cover your faces with the blushes of shame, and pierce your hearts with the sorrows of penitence. You may, or you may not, be doing things regarded by the world as worse than this. I do not charge you with these; I say nothing about that now. But I say that it ought to arouse your conscience, if not your fears; it ought to awaken a sense of guilt, if not a dread of danger, that you are treating God, your Father, thus. Repent of this your wickedness. Pray to your Father, not in the spirit of an alien, but of a penitent child. Begin to worship him in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Yes, he seeketh them, going from heart to heart in search of them. Shall he seek in vain?

Lastly, the subject should stimulate Christians to new faith and earnestness in prayer. Jesus, as we see, would have us approach God with the confidence of children. And, brethren, has not the Holy Spirit, by his gracious workings in our hearts, sometimes taught us the same precious lesson? Has he not filled us with filial love and trust, and led us to cry,

“Abba, Father”? O let us believe that his is a true Father’s heart! let us remember how rich he is both in love and in resources, and come to him with all our wants! In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we are directed to make known our requests to God. Our intercourse with him should be free and confidential. How much we suffer from the neglect of this we cannot know till the light of eternity reveals it, and then it will be too late to regain what we have lost. Meanwhile, let past remissness urge to future faithfulness. We have already lost far too much by praying too little; let us beware that we lose no more. “Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith.”

III.

MATTHEW vi. 9.

"Hallowed be thy name."

OFTEN the first holy feeling of which the convert is conscious is desire that God may be glorified. The question "What will become of me?" which just before absorbed his whole attention, is now lost sight of. No hope of heaven has yet dawned on him; but he has what is better. He is filled with indescribable peace and with joy in view of the character of God, and the chief desire of which for hours, perhaps for days, he is conscious is that God may be honored. Afterwards, anxiety for his personal salvation may return. Then cries for mercy are again offered, and he soon exults in the Christian's hope. At first he was satisfied with God; his new affections and feelings in view of God's character and government, and his new desires for God's glory, were all his heart could hold; but now there mingle with these, yet ever subordinate to them, the desire for his own everlasting bliss, and the hope and the joys springing from the hope, which is as an anchor to his soul.

This is the proper order of Christian feeling, — God first, self afterwards; God supremely, self subordinately. The fall subverted the right order of things. It put the creature first and the Creator last, or not at all in man's esteem. Regeneration restores the order, and puts God first, self last; God highest, self subordinate. This, too, is the order of prayer when piety is at its best. We are indeed drawn to the throne of grace by our wants, but not by these only. The Christian desires that God may be honored, even more than that his daily bread may be given, or his sins pardoned; and this de-

sire, as first and strongest, is the first that leaps to his lips in prayer. Jesus, in teaching us in what manner to pray, has respect to the proper order of Christian sentiment. Of seven petitions in this prayer, three are for the divine honor, and these are first in order, "*thy name, thy kingdom, thy will*;" these come before "*our daily bread, or our forgiveness, or our temptation, or our deliverance from evil*;" and the one that has the most exclusive regard to God's honor leads all the rest, — "HALLOWED BE THY NAME." Let us first consider its meaning, then the feelings with which, and the reasons for which, we should offer it.

I. *Its meaning.* "The name" of God naturally denotes some one of the titles by which he is called. Perhaps a Hebrew, on hearing this phrase, would think of the word "Jehovah," by which the true and living God, his people's God, was designated — that awful word which none but the high-priest dared to pronounce, and which it was deemed impious even for him to pronounce, except in the most holy place, and while engaged in the most sacred duties. But the phrase has also a larger meaning. It includes not only God's proper name, but also all manifestations of himself by which he makes himself known to his creatures — all which his titles and appellations would suggest to a well-informed and devout mind. His name is what he is and is known to be. It means God himself as revealed and manifested to men. The word "hallow" is here the translation of a word elsewhere translated "sanctify," meaning to make holy, and then to treat as holy, to honor as holy, that which is so. When, therefore, we treat God with the reverence due to him, we hallow his name; and this petition is a prayer that we and all others may treat him thus. In offering it we pray —

1. That men may not irreverently utter the names or titles of God. I have already alluded to the fact that the Hebrews carefully refrained from speaking the word "Jehovah." Not even in reading the Scriptures, in private, in the family, or in the synagogue, did they pronounce that one sacred word; but paused reverently when they came to it, and then substituted for it one of his other appellations, which seemed to them less sacred. The translators of our English Bible seem to have

shared in this feeling, and hence it comes to pass that, though the word JEHOVAH is found hundreds of times in the Hebrew Scriptures, we find it but three times in our English version. There may have been superstition in this; but it was far better than the irreverent carelessness with which some, even good men, speak the various titles of God, to say nothing of the levity of the profane. He who lightly uses any of God's names in conversation cannot feel much reverence for God; and there could scarcely be a surer training for perdition than the habit of interlarding common discourse with frequent appeals to God, or using his names as by-words. When we pray "Hallowed be thy name," we cannot mean less than to pray that all irreverent, profane utterances of the names of God may cease. But we mean much more.

2. We also pray in this petition that God's word and ordinances may be treated with due respect. If God has given us a book revealing his mind and will, a proper regard for him will lead us to treat that book respectfully, studying it with religious care and diligence, bowing our reason to its revelations and our will to its commands. We shall certainly avoid using it as if it were a jest-book, or as the vehicle of our wit and humor. If he has hallowed a day, we shall hallow it by spiritual worship. We shall attend the sanctuary, where men meet to learn his will and to worship him, not with thoughtlessness or formality, not for vain display, but to draw near to God, to know him, and to derive spiritual benefit.

3. But this is not all, for we pray in this petition that all men may revere God in their hearts. If the name of God denotes his manifested perfections, all that by which he is distinguished from all other beings, then to hallow his name is to revere himself. It is to obey the divine injunction by Peter, "Sanctify, hallow, the Lord God in your hearts." Yield him the veneration and the obedience of your souls. Now, this reverence is not a transient emotion, excited by some wonderful display or some vivid description of God's majesty. Men may be awe-struck by his movements in the tempest or the earthquake, just as the guards at the sepulchre of Jesus fell awe-struck when the angels appeared on the morning of his resurrection, and yet be far as they were from hallowing

the name of God. We pray for something far better than that, even that all men everywhere and always may revere God for his greatness and holiness.

4. We pray in this petition that all men may glorify God in their lives. Some take the word "hallow" in the text as equivalent to "glorify." It certainly includes that sense. We cannot sanctify God in our hearts without honoring him in our lives, for "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." If the heart is full of reverence for God, out of that fountain will flow corresponding words and actions in daily life. "This," as Leighton says, "is the most effectual sanctifying the name of God in the way of declaring it holy, when his people walk in holiness. Though you tell the world that he is holy, they know him not, they neither see him nor his holiness; but when they see that there are men taken out of the same lump of polluted nature with themselves, and yet so renewed that they do indeed live holily in the midst of a perverse generation, this may convince them that there is a brighter spring of holiness whence these drops are, that they perceive in men; for seeing it is not in nature, there must be another principle of it, and this can be no other than the Holy God. Thus is his name hallowed and he known to be holy by the holiness of his people." This would indeed be a holy world were this petition fully answered; and from every part of it would rise the anthem, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory."

II. What are the proper dispositions with which to offer this petition?

1. It is manifest that to offer this petition aright, we must have ourselves *sincere reverence for God*. How can we pray that all may honor him unless we honor him ourselves? The offering of the petition thus presupposes a heart that in some degree reveres and loves God, and desires to revere and love him more. And the more we revere, the more earnest will be our desire that our reverence may be increased. But, with none of this feeling, it were mockery for us to pray "Hallowed be thy name." You will see this very clearly if you suppose the extreme case that mingled with the curses of some den of wickedness on earth, and from the lips that utter

these curses, or mingled with the blasphemies and from the lips of devils, this petition were to ascend. The very supposition shocks us; but simply because the incongruity would be so great. We should regard the utterance of such a petition from such lips as the extreme of blasphemy. Now, the incongruity may be less glaring, but it is not less real, when any man, himself destitute of reverence for God, utters from his unhallowed lips, and more unhallowed heart, the petition of the text.

2. This petition should be offered with *humility*. Humility and reverence for God are wedded by natural affinities, and cannot be disjoined. Job's irreverent sayings made in the progress of his trial were intermingled with language of self-justification, but when God revealed his majesty, the patriarch's heart was filled with both humility and reverence. Listen to his words and mark how the two feelings blend in his mind: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The manifestation of God to Isaiah, and its effects on him, are rich in instruction on this point. "I saw," says the prophet, "the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Over the throne stood the seraphim. Each of them had six wings. With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And they cried one to another, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.' And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said, 'Woe is me, I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'" The whole attitude of the seraphim, their veiling their face and their feet with four wings, while two are ready to fly at his bidding, the words of their cry, show the blending of humility and reverence. If they, sinless as they are, and exalted so far above us, are so filled with humility and reverence before God, with what veneration and self-abasement should we approach him! Mark, too, the effect of this manifestation on the prophet. It impressed him deeply both with the divine

holiness and with his own unfitness to join in a worship so pure, and to deliver the messages of a God so holy. You remember, too, the scene when Peter, having witnessed one of the miracles of Jesus, exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is not needful that our emotions should be so overpowering as were those of Job, and Isaiah, and Peter; but some of that reverence and humility must be in our hearts when we pray to God. In the devout man, these are habitual dispositions, forming a part of the texture of his moral life; but they rise to unusual intensity when he bows before the Lord, his Maker.

3. We must offer this petition with *purposes ourselves to honor God*. Without such purposes, our prayer is insincere. For a man to pray that God may be universally honored, and then go forth himself to dishonor him, is as absurd as for him to utter prayer and blasphemy in the same breath; it is impiety resembling in character, though perhaps not equalling in degree, that of Judas who sat with Jesus at the Passover, while he was plotting to betray the Master whom he professed to love.

4. In offering this petition we pledge ourselves to do what we can for the conversion of men. Every sinner that is converted lessens by one the number of those who dishonor God and will blaspheme his name forever, and adds one to the number of those whose everlasting employment and delight will be to honor him. Do I then desire, is the first and strongest desire of my heart, leaping first to my lips when I pray, that God's name may be hallowed? Then I shall esteem no toil and no sacrifice too great if I may turn men from sin unto God. For this I shall work and pray, and give and live. When I rightly pray "Hallowed be thy name," I mean that I will do all this: My prayer pledges me to this.

III. *The motives* urging us thus to offer this petition are many and strong.

1. The Saviour has instructed us to do it. This alone ought to be decisive, for here we have the dictate of a wisdom that never errs, in whose decision we unhesitatingly trust, and before which we submissively bow.

2. This petition is the spontaneous expression of Christian

affection. The first desire of the natural heart is, "Let my name be celebrated;" but the first desire of the regenerated heart is, "Let God's name be honored;" and he who has not affections which, even without the precept of Jesus, would seek some such expression, is still a stranger to some of the best elements of the Christian temper. His religion, such as he has, is a religion of selfishness and not of godliness. Its root is not supreme love for God, but supreme regard for his own interests. In him, self is first, and God subordinate to self. True piety does desire that God may be honored; it is pained, it weeps and prays, when it sees him dishonored. The pain sometimes becomes a burden. It was *kind* in Christ to give us the direction of the text, for these strong emotions of the Christian find their best relief when they are uttered in prayer. Prayer is the relief of the burdened soul struggling with its overpowering feelings; and there are times when the grief of Christians at seeing God's name dishonored is almost overpowering; and if there is anything that can then relieve their aching hearts, it is that they may retire and pray, "Hallowed be thy name."

3. The right offering of this petition will deepen our reverence for God. If, on the one hand, the careless repetition of the words of prayer tends to harden the heart of him that repeats them against the truths enwrapped in the words he utters, until not only the words, but the truths, seem to lose their power of moving him; on the other hand, the effect is mightily the reverse when the words of prayer speak the sincere desires of the petitioner. Then his prayers react on his heart and make his holy desires and dispositions the stronger and the holier; and if there were no other reason, this, of itself, would justify the principle of God's government affirmed by our Lord, when he says, "Ask, and ye shall receive." In the case before us, this reflex influence of prayer is peculiarly strong. The petition itself brings God in his majesty and holiness before the mind; and so, not only by the natural power of the exercise and the expression of such feelings to deepen them, but also by the clearer and fuller views of God thus brought before the mind, does the sincere offering of this petition tend to increase our reverence for God. And there is

much reason why *we*, in these days, should try to increase it. We live too little as seeing him who is invisible. We have too little of veneration for God in our religion. We know too little of that deep delight which fills the heart when men give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness. We are too much losing sight of that side of his character which fills the soul with awe. We are too far off to be overawed by the radiance of his holiness and his majesty. We need to come nearer — much nearer to God, where we shall see far more of his glory, his holiness, and justice, as well as his love and mercy. Whenever we do thus move towards God, it will be praying, "Hallowed be thy name;" and as we approach and see the orb of his glory enlarging, and its beams brightening, the more heartfelt will be the prayer, "Hallowed be thy name."

4. It is in itself infinitely desirable that God's name should be hallowed. God is worthy of reverence, and whoever fails to render it, fails in his first and highest duties. He fails, too, of his own highest good. No intelligent creature approaches the dignity and the blessedness for which he was created further than he reveres God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Before this a man's whole life is unspeakable folly. Let the prayer of the text be fully answered, and this world is filled with purity and blessedness — just so important, therefore, as it is that God should receive his due honor, and that the world should be the home of virtue and happiness, rather than of sin and misery — just so important is it that God's name should be universally hallowed. In conclusion, remark :

1. Profane men are unfit for earth or heaven. Christ has taught us, as part of our first petition in our daily prayers, to pray against this sin of profaneness. It is a prevalent sin, provoking to God and paining the heart of good men. God is *their Father*. Profane man ! Suppose some one should treat your father's or your mother's name as you treat God's name, using it as a by-word, or expletive, in his common or frivolous talk, how keenly would you resent it ! But it is thus you use *my* Father's name, and I feel it like a wound. It pains me. It rouses my indignation. You treat with con-

tempt my great Father, whom I love as no child ever loved an earthly parent. No good man can listen to this profaneness, that makes light of all that is most sacred in the universe, without the keenest pain.

This sin also pollutes the moral atmosphere of the world. The influence of profane men, so far as it reaches, tends to destroy all reverence for God, both in themselves and others. And it were better that they should taint this vital air we breathe with the infection of some dire and deadly disease than that they should load the *moral* atmosphere with their curses. If a man must be profane, if it gives him so great pleasure to insult God that he cannot help doing it, then let him seek "a lodge in some vast wilderness," where his polluting breath will not sicken the heart of piety and poison the souls of others. O, it seems to me that if I must blaspheme, if the impious rage boiled so furiously within me that it must have vent, I would seek a desert, and, looking in every direction to be sure that no human ear could hear me, I would pour into the ear of God alone my curses, and then, when I had thus relieved myself, I would return to my fellow-men, till the cauldron of wickedness was ready to boil over again. I should thus, at least, be saved from the guilt of corrupting others.

The profane, then, are unfit for earth; and surely, then, much more unfit for heaven. There is no place for them there. There is but one world, of which we know anything, for which they are fitted. That is their "own place."

2. The petition of the text will yet be answered. All men, all creatures throughout the universe, will yet hallow the name of God. This world will yet be filled with men who will cheerfully, joyfully, honor God. But there is another method by which God will yet hallow his name, in the person of his enemies as well as of his friends. The Rev. William Romaine once, when crossing London bridge, heard a man utter this fearful imprecation, "God damn my soul for Christ's sake." Mr. Romaine, laying his hand on the blasphemer's shoulder, said, "My friend, God has done many things for Christ's sake, and perhaps he will do that too." Yes, many things, and of various sorts, he does for Christ's

sake. He hears his people's prayers and saves them, for Christ's sake; and for Christ's sake, too, he condemns to their merited punishment the rejectors of the great salvation. "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This does not mean that every created and fallen spirit will cheerfully render to Christ the homage due to him; but that when he cometh forth in judgment, every one will confess his authority—some with joyful allegiance, and others in forced subjection. So, then, God has more than one way of hallowing his own name. When Nadab and Abihu were consumed before the Lord for their impiety, God said, "I will be sanctified," or hallowed, "in them; and before all the people will I be glorified." There, in that act of judgment, in the blasted and blackened forms of the impious priests, was the fulfilment of the saying, "I will be hallowed in them." So in this whole race of sinners will God's name be hallowed: in some by their repentance and Christian service, in others by the judgments of his hand. Not always will men condemn God with impunity. The day to vindicate his long-insulted honor will come, and those whom mercy fails to win, justice will claim. *We must* sanctify God's name by our voluntary service, or we shall lay on him the painful necessity of sanctifying it in us by the infliction of judgment. Between these lies our choice. *We must* hallow God's great name; and the question for our choice is whether we will do this in holiness or in sin, as the recipients of God's mercy or as the monuments of his justice, as penitent prodigals returned to our Father or as unyielding rebels, punished with everlasting destruction from his presence. Choose. Choose wisely.

Finally, here is a test of piety. Each petition of this prayer furnishes such a test. I do not believe that any will be shut out of heaven who can, or any admitted to heaven who cannot, stand these tests faithfully applied. Have we, then, the dispositions involved in the right offering of this first petition? Can you say "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name," and mean it, every word of it, yourself loving, obeying, trusting, revering God as your Father,

and earnestly desiring that all others may so hallow his name? Ponder the question wisely. Perhaps, through long familiarity, you may repeat the words as a parrot might be taught to do. That is nothing, or worse than nothing. But suppose, as you are repeating them, their full significance should suddenly flash before your mind's eye, so that you should see their awful breadth and depth of meaning. Would not this sudden revelation of infinite meaning in words you have so often repeated as if they had no meaning, force on you some solemn questioning? "Do I desire that God should be everywhere honored? If so, then I honor him, respect his institutions, obey his laws, and seek for grace to serve him with reverence and godly fear. But do I? I say, 'Hallowed be thy name;' but how little pain do I feel when men irreverently speak his name, or when I see them living heedless of his authority? How little respect do I show in my daily life to his character and claims! Almost as little as if there were no such holy God to whom I stand in the nearest relation."

The Christian, too, will do well to apply this test. In his best state the order of the Lord's prayer is the order of his desires; and uppermost as well as deepest in his soul is the disposition which causes the petition "Hallowed be thy name" to spring first to his lips when addressing his heavenly Father. But as he leaves his first love, he loses this concern for God's honor, and the order of desire and prayer is reversed. His prayers are not so full of God as they used to be; they refer more to his own personal concerns, and less to the divine kingdom and glory. God again becomes second, and self first, which is the order, not of the recovery, but of the fall. How is it, brethren, with us? Is God or self first, deepest, uppermost, in our hearts? Is the petition "Hallowed be thy name," or something equivalent to it, the first that rises spontaneously from our heart, to our tongue, when we bow in prayer before God?

IV.

MATTHEW VI. 10.

"Thy kingdom come."

A KINGDOM means a king and subjects. In one sense, the whole universe is God's kingdom. He rules over it all as its rightful king. Every intelligent creature in it is rightfully his subject. But a portion of his universal kingdom have revolted from him. *This* is a rebel world. Yet here God is building up a holy kingdom out of these revolted subjects. This is that kingdom of grace so often spoken of in the New Testament under the titles, "The kingdom of God," "The kingdom of heaven," "The kingdom of Christ." Its real subjects are those who, under the power of the gospel and of the Holy Spirit, cheerfully submit to God as their king; its visible manifestation before men is the church of God. It was the theme of prophecy long before its King appeared among men. The most inspiring descriptions of Hebrew prophets depict its coming glories.

Jesus the Christ came to establish this kingdom. The burden of John, his forerunner's preaching, and of his own earlier preaching, was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His whole work on earth, his teaching, his life, his death, were necessary to the founding of this kingdom; and now that he has ascended to heaven, he reigns there over all things in the interests of this kingdom, and must reign till he have put all enemies under his feet. His kingdom, as he told Pilate, "is not of this world" — not worldly in spirit or aim or methods. It is a *spiritual* kingdom. The weapons of its warfare are not carnal, but mighty, — mighty because spiritual; not swords and rifles and cannon, not intrigue and diplomacy,

but truth and love. It rises in the midst of other kingdoms, its King invisible and omnipresent, its subjects a holy nation, a peculiar people, distinguished from other men in this, that they are cheerfully, joyfully subject to all the laws of God, their King. The visible church is the centre where they meet; the badges which attest their citizenship are mutual love and a holy life.

✓ This is a growing kingdom. At first it was small, fitly represented by Jesus as a grain of mustard-seed, as a little leaven hid in three measures of meal; and by the prophet as a little stone cut out of the mountain without hands; but the mustard-seed will grow till it becomes a tree, the leaven will diffuse itself till the whole mass of humanity is leavened, the little stone will enlarge till it fills the whole earth. It will conquer heart after heart, people after people, till all "the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

✓ Yet Jesus assures us that "this kingdom cometh not with observation," not with outward pomp and show, not with the splendor and the startling tramp of advancing legions, nor yet, as some teach, with the visible glory of Jesus descending from the skies to erect his throne in the earthly Jerusalem. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say 'Lo here! or Lo there!' for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." It does not gain its conquests in fields of strife which attract the gaze of men; but on "the unseen battle-ground of the heart." It does not dazzle the eye. It works like leaven, silently, powerfully. It is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

For all its subjects it has everlasting blessings. Trained here to obedience, they are removed one by one to the royal city; and at the close of this economy, this kingdom of grace will be merged in the kingdom of glory, and its joys and honors will be eternal.

✓ This is the kingdom for the coming of which Jesus teaches us to pray. But has it not already come? Has it not been in the world for more than eighteen centuries? Why, then, now pray for its coming? But as yet it has come only in part. It is still in the stage of progress and develop-

ment, and it will be proper to pray for its coming so long as any portion of the world, or any human soul, remains under the sway of Satan. I have thus indicated the nature of the kingdom for whose coming we pray, and at the same time given a general answer to the question, "What do we pray for when we intelligently offer this petition?" But it may be useful to descend to particulars.

1. We pray that *we may become wholly obedient to God*. No one can sincerely pray that every one may obey God, unless he desires himself perfectly to obey God. For can he be willing to except himself from the benefit of his own prayers? No; but as he sees in himself especially the evils of rebellion, he will pray especially for himself. A part of the meaning of his humble and earnest prayer must be, "Remove from my heart all selfishness, all roots and rootlets, all seeds of disobedience and rebellion. Bring every thought, every affection, every purpose, into obedience to Christ.

"Reign, O Lord, within my heart,
Reign to all eternity."

2. We also pray in this petition that *the church may become wholly obedient to God*. The church, as I have said, visibly represents the kingdom of God to the world. But the visible church has two classes of members, — real subjects of Christ and subjects only in profession and name. The proportion of these two classes, one to the other, differs at different times and in different sections of the church. Probably few or no local churches have ever existed without containing some who are Christ's only in name. For these, our prayer, "Thy kingdom come," means that they may become true and loyal, as well as professed subjects of Christ. The *real* church of God is the whole company of true believers. When I speak of the church, I do not mean my church, nor our church, but the church of God composed of all his real subjects. Even they are not all they should be. They need to be more fully consecrated to God and imbued with his spirit. We may all of us rise very far indeed, and yet be a little lower than the angels. Take Paul as your standard for one class of minds, and John

for another class. Think what a change would be made at once in the whole spirit and aspect and work of the church, if all its members were to rise at once to that standard. Would there be no change in this church if every member were to become a Paul or a John in loyalty to God and love for Christ? We acknowledge these imperfect brethren to be Christ's true subjects; we rank ourselves with them, and we know and feel that in all of us the spirit of obedience to Christ is far less strong and operative than it should be. Here is something to pray for. We ought not, as members of God's kingdom, to be satisfied until we and all our brethren are *perfectly obedient to our King*. Our prayer, "Thy kingdom come," means this.

3. It means also that *every form of wickedness and of religious error may be destroyed*. These are among the enemies which Christ, in the progress of his conquests, must put under his feet. It does not fall within my present purpose to consider at length the various forms of error and vice. I only glance at them in passing. In some sections of the world we find systems of idolatry, venerable with age, ministering to the strongest passions of men, and so maintaining their sway over vast multitudes. To-day, heathenism, in some of its many degrading, but enchanting forms, has fast hold of much more than half the human family. In another section we find Mohammedan delusion and imposture holding some of the fairest portions of the earth and 160,000,000 of souls under its yoke. In another direction we find superstition and formalism, under the name of Christianity, binding with a strange fascination and power the souls of men in spiritual bondage. Dazzling the senses, appealing to the love of show and the love of art, giving indulgences to sin or an easy escape from its penalties, winding about the hearts of its votaries the fetters of a venerable and enchanting superstition, Popery at this time sways the minds of almost 200,000,000 of the human family, and the Greek Church more than 75,000,000. If from these vast overshadowing errors we turn to lands where the gospel is preached with some degree of purity, we find that there men have interwoven their own errors with the truth, and sometimes while calling themselves Christians, have devised sys-

tems destitute of the spirit and of the peculiar truths and weighty sanctions of the gospel. Then look at the various forms of selfishness and crime, of oppression and wrong, that curse our world. These are the leagued forces of him who in Scripture is styled "the prince and the god of this world," and with these he wars with the God that ruleth in heaven. They must fall, before the petition of the text can be fully answered. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we pray ✓ for their downfall; that idolatry may cease, that Mohammedanism may be banished from the world, that Romanism may no longer fascinate and delude, that every form of error that bears the name of Christianity may be destroyed, that politics may be purified, that intemperance, profaneness, dishonesty, oppression, all confederated sin, every business and every enterprise that wars against morality or godliness, may come to an end. To effect all this it may be needful that God should send his righteous judgments, as well as his gospel and his Holy Spirit, among men. I think that prophecy distinctly points to such judgments as preparing the way for the triumph of the kingdom of God.

✓ Take the following as illustrating the *style* of prophecy on this subject. "It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it; and many people shall say, 'Come, let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'" Take another passage: "Thy gates shall be open continually, they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." In both these passages we see the work of conversion going on, men repairing to Zion to learn God's law, crowding continually — day and night — into the open gates

of the church; and in both we see God judging among the nations, rebuking many peoples, destroying, utterly wasting the nations that will not serve him. In other passages we see at once the rise of Christ's kingdom, and the downfall, by righteous judgments, of the wicked kingdoms of this world. Every kind of agency is laid under contribution for the promotion of the kingdom of God—judgments and mercies, the revolutions of empires, and the discoveries of science, and the inventions of art, as well as the preaching of the gospel and the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit. Some of the worst forms of error and of wrong are so interwoven with, so supported by, the governments of this world, that, in order to destroy the wickedness, it seems needful to destroy the governments. Hence wars, commotions, the downfall of thrones will attend the triumph of the gospel, and prepare the way for it. These may be God's methods of answering the prayers of myriads of his faithful ones who cry daily, "Thy kingdom come." The history of our country has lately furnished a striking illustration of this. You know the story. We had in our land a gigantic wrong—a mighty obstacle to the progress of God's kingdom. We knew not how it could be removed. Selfish men swore it never should be removed. But good men cried to God. The oppressed cried to God. He answered them by terrible things in righteousness; and four years of bloody warfare destroyed the evil. This is only one illustration of the methods employed by God for removing whatever stands in the way of the progress of his kingdom. This century has furnished many similar illustrations. To-day he seems to be gathering his forces for the destruction of that Mohammedan power which has been in the past the fiercest foe that his kingdom has had to encounter.

4. We pray in this petition *that every human heart, the world over, may yield to the supremacy of God.* We pray for the universal outpouring of God's Spirit, for the spiritual renovation of all men. This is the consummation of God's kingdom on earth. A result sure to come. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, God's name will be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered to him—a pure offering." This is what we

pray for — that every human heart may be a throne for Jesus, a miniature kingdom of heaven. Then will the world be filled with peace and with love. Business will be conducted according to the golden rule. Politics will become clean and sweet. Nations will treat each other according to the principles of the gospel. They will settle their differences without a resort to rifles and cannon. They will not learn war any more.

Was ever more meaning condensed into three words than into these, "Thy kingdom come." We pray that *we* may become thoroughly obedient to Christ; we ask the same for the *whole church of God* on earth; we pray for the *downfall of every form of error and sin*, and for the *renewal of every human heart*.

Let us now turn to consider some prerequisites to the right offering of this prayer.

1. We must *ourselves be willing subjects of the kingdom of God*. If not, though our lips say, "Thy kingdom come," our hearts cannot mean it. Why, we will not allow Christ to reign in our own souls. We desire that his kingdom may come, and yet are not ourselves subject to him. We are quite unwilling that it should come too near us, especially that it should subdue our hearts, break down the strongholds of pride and selfishness and sin, and set up the throne of God on their ruins. No! None can offer this prayer who is not himself a willing subject of God, who has not said, and does not now say, —

"Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,
Welcome to this heart of mine,
Lord, I make a full surrender,
Every power and thought be thine,
Thine entirely,
Through eternal ages thine."

2. Rightly to offer this prayer *we must be ready to do our part to hasten the coming of this kingdom*. God employs his people as agents in this work. He works in his sphere, turning and overturning by his providence, causing the events of slowly moving centuries to converge to the great result he aims at, and pouring out his Holy Spirit to give efficacy to

his gospel. This is his work which we cannot do. But he has assigned to us a sphere also, not indeed beyond his superintendence, but still real, and so needful to the progress of this kingdom that Jesus did not hesitate to say to his disciples, "ye are the salt of the earth," "ye are the light of the world." With what propriety, then, can he pray "Thy kingdom come" who does not labor in the sphere that God has assigned to him? Let me illustrate this by a supposition which, though it seems violent, is suggested by the imagery of Jesus — "Ye are the light of the world." Suppose, then, the sun, constituted by God the light of this solar system, to be an intelligent agent, endowed with power to dispense or withhold his beams at pleasure, and suppose that from some selfish motive he should withhold the whole, or the greater part, of his light. What mockery, then, for him to pray to the Father of lights that *he* would illumine the solar system! What sin, then, in his prayer, "Father, pour light over this system of worlds"! Why, he was made and placed in the centre of the system to do this very work, and it is a glorious work. Might not God reply, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Do thine own work." Similar is their inconsistency who pray, "Thy kingdom come," and yet do not shine as lights in the world. God has assigned to them a work, and their work they must *do*. God will not do that — he works in his own sphere — he sends down his Spirit, like the fertilizing shower; but he will not sow the seed which this rain makes to germinate. He gives the increase, but Paul must plant. He will not preach the gospel, as he once proclaimed the law from Sinai, with his own voice; nor distribute Bibles and tracts; nor exhibit before men the beauty of a Christian example. Men must do that. It is our work. What, then, have we to do?

1. We must show the power of the gospel in our life. Every Christian's influence for Christ ought to be strongest in the circles nearest to him. But in order to this he must show in his own life the transforming power of the gospel. Otherwise, though his gifts and his words may do good at such a distance that the inconsistencies of his daily life are not seen, yet, in the inner circle where his life is seen, his character will neutralize his power for good. *There*, at least, he can do

little or nothing to advance the kingdom of Christ. Perhaps there he is hindering it. You may throw seeds of life to a distance; but what you sow close around you is the seed of your own character. Yet how many of the professors of the gospel show but little of its benign influence in their lives. This must be altered. If the gospel is anything, it is everything; and it should be seen to have the entire control of every one who professes to be a Christian, and it should be manifest to all that he is not animated by the spirit, nor swayed by the motives, of the world. Such will be the position of the church ere the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," is fully answered. This will be a position of wondrous power, and the leaven of Christian piety will work from heart to heart till the whole mass is leavened.

2. We must make personal effort to extend the kingdom of God. "The salt of the earth" must be brought in contact with the minds it was meant to save. We must touch other minds, not simply as men, but as *salt*. We must carry the light to darkened homes and darkened hearts. Every Christian must do this. There is a tendency among men to do their most self-denying duties by proxy. The Romanist is glad to put the priest between him and God, committing to him the care of his religious concerns. Is there no kindred error among us? Do Protestant Christians never put the minister between them and the world, to do for them the duties they owe to the world, as the Romanists put the priest between their souls and God? This is all wrong. Each must labor in his own sphere—the minister in his, each Christian in his—for the coming of God's kingdom. Every one who knows the worth of a soul should speak of that worth to his fellow-men. Every one who has felt the love of Christ should speak with glowing heart of that love. Every Christian should train himself, by the discipline of head and heart, for the work of winning souls, as the mechanic trains himself for his trade. When Christians do this, they will be able, without that sense of inconsistency, which must lessen both the fervor and the faith of prayer, to offer the petition, "Thy kingdom come."

3. We must give for the coming of God's kingdom. Most Christians might quadruple their donations for this object, and

yet, in the pecuniary sense, the religion of the gospel would be the cheapest that ever swayed the human heart, cheaper than Judaism, or Mohammedanism, or any form of heathenism. But what if the gospel did require more than any other religion? It reveals more of the self-sacrifice of God for us; "Know ye not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich." God requires his people to hold their property in trust for him. His church is by constitution a missionary body. Her task is to evangelize the world, and the work requires means. In a warfare between contending nations, he is deemed a traitor who refuses his quota of the means needful for the war. What shall we say of him who, professing to belong to God's kingdom, will not contribute as God has prospered him, for this holy warfare. When I see men, members of Christian churches, spending their money freely for personal gratification, or avariciously hoarding it, while they do nothing, or next to nothing, to support or to diffuse the gospel, it seems to me they must either change their conduct or cease to pray "Thy kingdom come."

But our chief defect is of personal holiness. That would ensure all else, — earnest prayer, personal effort, holy example, liberal giving. Let us, then, consecrate ourselves fully to God, and pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit till our hearts are filled and fired with holy love.

My friends, are you all the willing subjects of this kingdom of God? No others can share its blessings. It will live and triumph. In this I rejoice; I rejoice, too, that, however you may act, God will in some way make your action subserve the coming of his kingdom; but higher far would be my joy if you were all his willing subjects; for I desire for you, scarcely less than for myself, the blessings that the sons of God will share when the kingdom of grace is merged in the kingdom of glory. I wish I could so paint those blessings as to attract you. Think of what it will be to lose heaven, its holiness lost, its joys lost, all lost forever. And you need not lose them — not one of you. They are offered you, urged upon you. Submit to Christ. Welcome him as your Saviour and your King. Ask him what he will have you do, and do it, and

keep doing it while life shall last, imploring his grace to help you. Will you not be persuaded? Can I not win to-day one new subject for my God?

O thou renewing Spirit, I turn to thee; I cannot reach these hearts, reach thou them. Reveal to them, by that light which thou pourest on the souls of men, their duties and their dangers, their sin and their Saviour. Bow their wills, renew their hearts, that they may share in the blessings of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

V.

MATTHEW vi. 10.

“Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”

HEAVEN and earth are here viewed as localities, both within the limits of God's dominions, but unlike in the spirit with which their inhabitants regard and treat his will. Heaven is free from the spirit of rebellion, which is rife on earth. The plans which God is carrying forward on earth — his whole remedial system, the gospel, the ministry, the sacraments, the work of the Holy Ghost — are all designed and fitted to restore earth to the lost spirit of heaven. Heaven is God's standard for earth. His children, who dwell on earth, desire the same thing, and, acting in their sphere, coöperate with God to hasten it. Nothing short of this can satisfy them. The two petitions of the Lord's Prayer which precede this aim indirectly at the same object. We pray in the first that God's name, that God himself, may everywhere be treated with due reverence; then in the second that his kingdom of grace may extend its benignant rule over the whole earth; and here in the third that all men may be perfectly submissive to God's will. This is the summit and sum of the Christian's desires for the race to which he belongs.

I. When we pray “Thy will be done,” we may refer either to God's will, which as made known in his providence we are called to suffer, or to God's will, which as revealed in his word we are called to do. In the first case we acquiesce in what God sees fit to do; in the second case we pray that all may do what he bids them do. Some take this petition in the first sense, supposing it to be illustrated by the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, “Father, if this cup may not pass from me except

I drink it, thy will be done." But it may also be illustrated by his other words, "I delight to do thy will, O God." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." It must also be borne in mind that the conduct of the inhabitants of heaven, angels and spirits of just men made perfect, is here presented for imitation; but they cannot be examples of resignation in suffering, for they have never suffered, or have ceased to suffer. But give to the petition the broader meaning of consent to God's will in doing, as well as in suffering, and they may fitly be held up as models for our imitation.

Some have thought that the words "as it is in heaven" refer to the movements of the heavenly bodies, as if the petition were that men might move as obediently and harmoniously in their spheres, as the sun, moon, and stars do in theirs; that we may obey as uniformly and perfectly the moral laws under which we are placed, as they the physical laws which regulate their motion. There is something impressive in this view. There is written in the starry heavens a lesson for man; and as suns and planets move in ceaseless harmony, each yielding to the laws under which God placed it, and fulfilling the part which God assigned it, they rebuke our disorder and disobedience, and show us how beautiful a thing it were if we too would obey God's laws and fulfil the part he has assigned to us.

But this is not the meaning of the text. In the Hebrew as in the Christian theology it was taught that somewhere in the realms of space there is a world called heaven, the heaven of heavens, the high and holy place. There, according to the Hebrew theology, God dwelt in some peculiar sense, as in some peculiar sense he dwelt in the most holy place of the temple at Jerusalem. The Christian theology adds to this that there Jesus dwells in his glorified humanity. In both Testaments that world is represented as the home of two orders of intelligent creatures; namely, of angels who never fell, and of spirits of just men made perfect. Jesus in the text teaches us to pray that men on earth may do God's will even as these unfallen and these perfected spirits do it in heaven. How then is God's will done in heaven?

1. It is done *in all things*. Each spirit there has respect

to all God's commandments, whatever they may bid him do. "If," says John Newton, "two angels came down from heaven to execute the divine commands, and one was appointed to conduct an empire, and the other to sweep a street in it, they would feel no inclination to change places." I have no doubt that this is true. Each would think it enough, and honor enough, to do God's bidding. The Psalmist says of the angels that they "do his commandments, hearkening for the voice of his word," listening for the intimations of his will; and if they hear a word from him, it is enough, — they fly to fulfil their ministry. Men, even those who profess to be God's servants, do not always do his will thus. They do some acts that outwardly look like acts of obedience to God — easy acts, or shining acts in the view of the world; but other acts not so easy, or not so shining, they omit. Now this is doing not God's will, but their own. "A covetous father," says an old divine, "condemns the prodigality of his lavish son, and the son cries out against the avarice of his niggardly father, and thus both seem to condemn sin; but the truth is neither does it. It is only two extreme sins fighting together, neither of them regarding the rule which God has set. It is but their two idols choking each other." But all true obedience is universal and not partial. When a man seems to obey in some things, and refuses to obey in other things, this is only because the letter of the law happens to coincide with his selfish wishes in some things and not in others; and whether in more things or in fewer he seems to obey God, he does so simply because the selfish will that is within him happens to bid him do the same outward acts that God bids him do.

2. God's will is *done cheerfully in heaven*. To the inhabitants of that world "his commandments are not grievous." If you imagine an angel going with slow steps and sullen looks to do God's will, doing it simply because he must, and dares not do otherwise, you feel that heaven is not the place for him, that he is near his fall, nay, that he is already falling, or fallen — that the angel is becoming a devil. Such, you know, is not the spirit of heaven. There they do the will of God not because they are forced but because they

delight to do it. There are no sullen looks, no reluctant steps, no resisting hearts there, when the will of God is made known; and swift as an angel's wing would fly to do God's bidding, an angel's heart would fly swifter still.

3. God's will is *done constantly in heaven*. The chain of their obedience is never broken, but link after link of bright acts is added to it forever. Those ministers of his that do his pleasure are always doing it. They serve him day and night in his temple. Thus ought all God's subjects to do his will. But here, even those who are God's true servants sometimes fail in duty, though every such failure causes them bitter regret; for it is the spirit of obedience always to obey, and it is only through the force of overmastering temptation, or through weakness or lack of watchfulness, that they fail, and then they violate their own deepest convictions and strongest principles, as well as God's commands. There are the same reasons for obeying God at all times as there are for obeying him at any time; and the love of God, the essence and principle of obedience to him, is not a fitful and feverish excitement, but the healthfully beating heart of the moral system; and when, as in heaven, the love is perfect, there is no more cessation in its pulsations than in those of a healthful human heart. It beats on and on forever. To stop even for a moment would be to die.

4. God's will is *done submissively in heaven*. The fact that God does or bids a thing is of itself sufficient proof that it is wise and good, and the highest and oldest of the spirits of heaven must sometimes fall back upon that as their resting-place. It is a mistake to suppose that these spirits know everything, understand the reasons of all God's commands, or the whole scope of the vast schemes which they see him carrying forward, and in which they are required to bear a part. There are things into which even angels desire to look, and the principalities and powers in the heavenly places are learning from the church the manifold wisdom of God. Still, they are ministering to those who shall be heirs of salvation, and helping as God bids them in the development of those schemes into whose mysteries they desire to look. They may have as much that calls for trust and submission as we, but

amid the clouds and darkness which veil the reasons of his vast designs, they still are swift to do his bidding. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God sometimes perfects praise. The following is an instance : —

“Some little Sabbath-school girls were once questioned as to the petition of the text. ‘What is to be done?’—‘God’s will.’—‘Where?’—‘On earth.’—‘How?’—‘As it is in heaven.’—‘And how do the angels in heaven do it?’—‘They do it immediately,’ says one; ‘Actively,’ says a second; ‘Unitedly,’ said a third; and there was a pause, and a little girl arose and said, ‘Why, sir, they do it *without asking any questions.*’” Yes, they do it without asking any questions in respect to the reasonableness of God’s requirements. They do not stop to ask, “Why?” before doing what God bids them do. O when will man cease to question the reasonableness of God’s commands or of God’s plans? When will he cease to rebel against God, because he cannot see why he should, or should not, do this or that, which God requires or forbids? Thy will, O God our Father, be done on earth *as it is in heaven!*

5. The will of God *is done by every spirit in heaven.* The angels who left their first estate are cast out, and from this world there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth. No; there is not a spirit there who does not do God’s will, and do it cheerfully, constantly, perfectly. From Gabriel to the infant that just passed through the gates into the city, all are engaged in doing God’s will. So completely are their wills subjected to his, that though there are myriads on myriads of minds to choose, yet it is in effect as if his were the only will in all that world. Every will moves freely, and yet moves just as his moves. I am glad to know there is one such world in the universe. I wish this world were such.

6. God’s will is done *harmoniously in heaven.* No strifes, no envyings, no jealousies, no suspicions interrupt the harmony of these brothers. They are not split into sects, each quarrelling with the rest as to the best way of doing God’s will. There is no one longing for the preëminence, and wretched because he cannot have it. Each fills the station and performs the part assigned him by God, with entire cheerfulness, not

envying those above him, nor despising those below him, but counting that he and all others are sufficiently honored by filling the station — whether higher or lower, larger or smaller — which God has appointed. Discord is the fruit of sin, and we have enough of it on earth for the whole universe, and enough of it during these years of time for all eternity. There is too much of it even among those who profess to be doing God's will; but this shows, the faintest note of discord shows, that they are not yet doing his will as it is done in heaven. The harmony of the heavenly world is one of its most delightful features. I rejoice that there is such a world. I wish this were such.

II. We will now look at some of the *motives* for offering this petition.

1. In offering it we shall be doing God's will. Jesus has told us to pray thus; and this we ought to regard as enough without asking any more questions. Yet we may reverently look at still other reasons, not as questioning the propriety of the precept, but as animating our too reluctant hearts to this duty.

2. The effect on ourselves of offering this petition would be eminently beneficial. It keeps before us the high and true standard. It was both wise and kind in Jesus to lead us to contemplate this standard in the moments when the heart is most awed and humbled in the presence of God. If we daily offer this petition, seeing and feeling its depth of meaning, we shall be aiming at nothing short of the holiness of heaven, striving ourselves to do God's will here as it is done there, not deeming it enough that when we reach heaven we shall do that will as it is done there; but as we pray that we and all others may do that will on *earth* as it is done in heaven, we shall strive ourselves *so* to do it, and *so* to do it *now*. We shall thus learn to measure ourselves, not among ourselves, which is not wise, but with the perfect spirits of the heavenly world, which is wise. We shall try to act as one of them would act were he sent to earth to occupy the position in which Providence has placed us.

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God is wise, God is righteous, God is holy, God is love. His will, then, must always be like himself, — perfectly wise, righteous, holy, and benevolent. If that will expresses itself in command, his law will be holy, just, and good. Who can doubt that it is infinitely desirable that all God's subjects should obey such a law? All deviation from it is, and must be, *wrong*, full not only of wickedness, but of the seeds of all mischiefs and of all miseries. What sort of a heart, then, must he have who does not desire that God's will may be perfectly done here? What would he substitute for it? The conflicting wills of men? Ah, that has been tried for wretched and weary centuries. The result has been seen in the disorders, the crimes, the woes, which mark the whole course of human history. How different would that history have been if God's will had always been perfectly done here? "It would doubtless have been no less full than now of inspiring incident; but it would have been a history without a war and without a crime, without a prison or a gibbet, without a wrong, — a history of righteousness, and love, and joy, — a history of progress, too, in all that can elevate and bless mankind. If now all men were to begin to do God's will as it is done in heaven, all wrongs would instantly cease, and the whole current of history would at once be changed. And what a change! A world filled with busy inhabitants, and not a wrong done in it; no act of injustice, no selfish, unloving act! Who would not desire such a change, and desiring it, pray for it?

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5. The full answer to this petition *would transform this world into heaven*. I mean, that if the holiness of heaven were brought down to earth, its happiness would be brought down also. If earth were to become like heaven in character, it would become like it in bliss. Of heaven we may say that it is not its location, nor its material beauty, so much as the perfection of its obedience, which makes it so joyful a world. I have no doubt that heaven is a delightful world in the beauty of its material scenery. It is fitting that it should be. Even in this, populated as it is by a race of sinners, God has scattered beauty about us so profusely that I cannot doubt that the world of the holy is replete with everything that can delight the eye. But it is not this which forms the main charm of heaven, but the holiness of its inhabitants. We need only the same virtues to transform this world into a paradise. Tempests might continue to rage, and the ground to require toil, and men to waste with sore disease, and death to reign, yet if God's will were done here as it is in heaven this were a blessed world. "Just imagine," says Thomas Chalmers, "that integrity and benevolence were perfect and universal in this world; that each held the rights and the reputation of his neighbors to be dear to him as his own; that the suspicions and jealousies and heart-burnings, whether of

hostile violence or of envious competition, were altogether banished from human society; that the emotions, at all times delightful, of good-will on one side, were ever and anon calling the emotions, no less delightful, of gratitude back again; that truth and tenderness held their secure abode in every family; and that on stepping forth amid the wider companionships of life, each could confidently rejoice in every one he met as a brother and a friend;" and I will add, as above all, and the source of all, that each was rejoicing in God as a reconciled Father, doing his will, and worshipping him with supreme love, "we ask, if on this simple change,—a change, you will observe, in the moral condition of humanity, though winter should repeat its storms as before, and every element of nature were to abide unaltered, our millennium would not have begun, and a heaven on earth be realized?"

This moral change would also lessen many of the physical ills that flesh is heir to. Were the appetites and passions of men brought under the control of the gospel, were there that industry and temperance and serenity of mind and exalted virtue which God requires, many of the diseases which curse our world would disappear; others which we may suppose necessarily incidental to humanity as now constituted would become less frequent and less painful; and the vigor of youth would be carried on into age, and most of the sufferings which attend the decline of life would be mitigated. Death itself would become more easy, and being in all cases attended by the consolations of the gospel, by the support of God's grace and the hope of eternal life, would be met with calmness or with joy, while those who gathered about the bed of the departing would say, "Thy will be done," and wait with resignation and with confidence the fast coming hour when the broken friendship of earth shall be renewed. O let God's will be done here as it is done in heaven, and I ask no better, no happier world than this for such a race as ours in the infancy of their being. I ask your attention now to a few concluding remarks.

1. The subject shows us the moral grandeur of the peculiar work of the church on earth. Our aim is nothing less than to transform this world into a miniature of heaven, to make

every man and woman and child complete in all the will of God. "A noble aim indeed," some one may say, "if it were not chimerical." "Chimerical indeed," I reply, "if God were not our helper." Leave that out of view and you may well laugh at our hopes; but with God and all his ministers of judgment and of mercy on our side, we can afford to smile at your laughter, and go on in hope with our work. It is a great work, aiming at the moral renovation of our entire race; it is a philanthropic work, designed to banish the woes that now oppress the world, and to fill it with joy; it is holy, seeking to fill the world with virtue in the place of banished wickedness; it is godlike, making the church on earth a co-worker with God in his most beneficent plans.

2. Every laborer in this work shall receive his reward. "He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." What are these wages? What this fruit? They know, who having turned many to righteousness are shining as the brightness of the firmament; they know, the faithful missionaries, who leaving home and country went forth to the distant lands to bear the message of salvation; they know, pastors, who faithful to their trust have made their people to wear the faint but real likeness of heaven, and have gone to their reward; they know, the fathers and the mothers, who doing God's will at home, trained their children for heaven, where they have seen them gathered; they know, the faithful Christians, whose influence was felt for God and holiness throughout the communities where they lived, and whose works have followed them; they know, the rich, who contributed of their wealth and added their example, their personal influence, and their prayers to the cause of God; and the poor, who having nothing else to give cast in their mites, and gave their faith, their patience, their example, and their intercessions; all, all who true to their trust on earth have gone to their reward, know what is that fruit which is gathered unto life eternal. And if we are faithful we soon shall know. This saying of Jesus will be fulfilled: "Both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." It will not matter then whether one has sowed or has reaped, what his work has been, if it has been Christ's work, faithfully

done, even though he but sowed seed for the harvests which long years afterwards others garnered, he shall share the general joy.

3. But I am recalled from these anticipations by the thought that there are some of you who are not doing the will of God; and that if I would bear my part in this work, I must warn them of their danger, and try to lead them to obey God. You, my friends, have not done, are not doing, have now no purpose to do, the will of God, to make that the supreme rule of your life. The charge is a grave one, but is it not true? Think of it. Think of it now. Go home and think of it, and let conscience do its work; and you will see that it is no light matter to live regardless of God's authority, but a thing that ought to fill you with shame and with penitence. Nor is the danger of such a course a trifle. It is something that may well alarm you. I tell you, speaking in God's name, that if you would be saved, you must begin to do God's will as made known in his gospel. You have begun a controversy with him which there is but one way to settle. You must yield to him. He will not open any other way of salvation that will require less submission on your part. He will not give up his will for your sake. Why should he? His will is right, and yours is wrong.

VI.

MATTHEW vi. 11.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

“THE Lord’s Prayer” consists of two portions, the first pertaining to the honor, the kingdom, and the will of God, and the second to the wants of man. We have considered the first; let us now proceed to the second. Here the petition which asks for the supply of our temporal wants leads the rest, not as most important, but as frequently the most imperious and pressing. In the first part of the prayer, we begin with the Father’s honor, and come down to man as his servant on the earth, bound to do his will. In the second part, we begin with man’s lowest wants, and go up step by step till we pray for deliverance from *all evil*, — sin, and woe, and death. Our prayer ends where it begins, — in the joy and holiness of heaven. We begin by recognizing our Father in heaven; we end by seeing his children in heaven. But while they are yet on earth they have wants, the most clamorous, though not the most important, of which is for their daily bread. I propose now to develop, as I shall be able, the meaning of this petition, in a series of observations which will not, I hope, be without interest and profit.

1. *We are dependent on God for the supply of our bodily wants.* “Bread” is here the representative of *all these wants*. Jesus teaches us to regard this as God’s *gift*. “Give us our daily bread;” not pay it to us as a debt, *give* it to us as a favor. Prayer is itself the expression of dependence, and so the petition teaches us that we depend on God for our daily food, and for all else that is needful for the support and comfort of the body. The Bible everywhere teaches the same

truth. "Every good gift is from above;" "He openeth his hand, and supplieth the wants of every living thing;" "These all wait on him, and he giveth them their food in due season." He may and does employ various subordinate agencies, as the laws and forces of nature and the skill and industry of man; but still it is he that gives these favors to man. Grant, for instance, that, in order to supply us with bread, the vapors must rise, and clouds must form and pour their treasures on our fields, and that all this is done according to established laws; still, it is no less true that it is God who gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. He established the laws; he presides over their operations. So, through whatever channels blessings may come, they come from him. We are dependent ultimately, not on the laws of nature, not on the caprices of our fellow-men, not even on our own skill and industry, but on God, who, by means of all subordinate agencies, is continually conferring favors on us.

Now, partly because God works, not directly and visibly, but through nature's laws and man's actions, because he is out of sight, men are prone to practical atheism on the point before us. They deny that he works at all. They forget God and defy his laws. For a harvest, they are apt to feel dependent on rain and sunshine; and to look no higher, as if the weather were their God! They fret against the weather, not considering that this is fretting against *the Lord*. The text rebukes this impiety, and leads the mind directly to God as the fountain of all good — daily bread as well as final salvation. Did you ever think how near the verge of starvation we come every year? Let all the harvests of the earth, all the fruits of the earth of every kind, fail for one year, and the race would die, and the world be as completely depopulated as by a universal deluge, or by the fires of the last conflagration. And it is God's constant care that prevents this failure. I have known, more than once, some of the crops in given localities almost wholly cut off, by drought or by floods or by frost or by insects. Even this sometimes caused great distress; but the failure was limited in degree and in space, and nothing compared with universal failure. And it is God's providence that prevents such universal failure. He sees to it that seed-time and

harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, sunshine and rain, shall not cease. This dependence on God is constant. We must ask *every day* for our daily bread. We can never lay up so much or so safely as to lessen our dependence on God. You may sow, but unless he sends rain and sunshine, your fields at harvest-time will be barren as a desert. Your barns may be filled with the harvests you have gathered, and God's lightnings may strike them, and the fruits of your toil be strewed in ashes before the wind. No man is so rich to-day that he may not to-morrow be destitute, looking to the charities of men for food to allay the cravings of hunger. Not long since, the papers told us of a man dying in a poor-house who, a few years before, was worth a million of dollars. Nay! a man may starve while his garners are filled with corn, and his coffers with gold. It is only the fool who says to himself, "Soul! thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Thus we hang on God. If we are fed, he feeds us; if we are clothed, he clothes us; if we live and move and have our being, it is in HIM that we do it.

2. *We are bound to express this dependence by prayer.* Prayer is the natural expression of dependence, and should be offered for everything we need for which we are dependent, unless God has excepted some things, saying, "For these you need not pray." But the Bible makes no such exceptions, but tells us "*In every thing*," not in great things or in spiritual things only, but "*in every thing* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Some seem to think it hardly fitting to pray about our temporal matters, except in great emergencies. Sometimes this feeling takes the airs of piety. Men think it beneath the exalted business of prayer to be talking with God about our food, and inconsistent with the holy desires of piety to be thinking in the closet of what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed. We ought to mortify the wants of the body, and pray rather that the heart may be purified than that the stomach may be gratified. "Ask God for sanctifying grace, and earn your own bread and butter, or else go without it"—this is the feeling. This may sound pious to some ears, but it involves the impiety of impugning

the wisdom of God, and this in two ways: first, as respects the directions of his Word, and, secondly, as respects the arrangements of his Providence. Christ bids us pray every day for our daily bread. God bids us pray in *every* thing. Are we wiser and holier than he? This view, too, impugns the wisdom of Providence; for, humbling as the fact may be, it is a fact that we have bodies, and they must be fed, or we are unfitted for the spiritual duties of religion; for God has so joined soul and body that if one suffers the other must suffer with it. Each, too, must be nourished with its own proper food. The body will no more thrive on faith or on truth than the soul on bread. Yes! melancholy as the fact may be, we must eat and drink and sleep, or we must die. God, who made us with these wants, made us also dependent on him for the supply of them; and no degree of holiness, no diligence or skill of ours, can lessen this dependence. Shall we, then, exclude from our prayers wants so imperious, which, if supplied at all, God must supply?

These, then, are God's gifts, necessary for our welfare, and should be prayed for. He may grant them without our asking; for, in the plenitude of his goodness, he maketh his sun to rise, and his rain to fall, on the prayerless as well as the prayerful. But does it thence follow that it would do us no good to ask? I can think of nothing better fitted to keep up a constant and endearing intercourse between God and his children than our daily asking for our daily food. He thus makes use of these bodily wants to promote our spiritual welfare—to bring us into closer fellowship with himself. You are always wanting; always ask, then. Your wants come daily; let your prayers come as often. It is reported of Franklin that he once asked if it would not do as well to implore God's blessing on the whole barrel of pork at once as on every meal. This sounds witty, but it is not wise. God loves his children, and wishes them to hold daily communion with him. He delights to have them speak to him often. He knows it will do them good. Asking his blessing on a whole harvest or barrel of pork would neither satisfy the yearnings of his paternal heart, nor answer his beneficent ends in promoting the spiritual good of his children.

3. *Bread is here the representative, not of life's superfluities, but of life's necessities.* We are to ask for *bread*, not for luxuries; for that which is essential, not for that which is superfluous. It is essential that we be fed and clothed and housed, but this is all that is essential. We are not taught to ask for riches, for they are not essential. They may add to a Christian's means of usefulness, and he will gratefully receive them, if God sees fit to give them; but, beyond a competence, they add nothing to the real comfort of life; for "a competence is all we can enjoy." Nor do riches always increase a Christian's usefulness. They augment his power to do good, but they often lessen still more his disposition to do good. Hence he is only to pray for his *daily bread*, i.e., the *necessary bread for the day*—that which is sufficient to sustain life in comfort. He ought to limit his desires for worldly good, as Jesus teaches him to limit his prayers, by that which suffices for his bodily comfort and mental improvement. When a man has that, how much happiness does he gain by additions to his wealth? If, while pursuing an honest calling,—diligent in business, as God bids,—God gives him more, let him take it gratefully and use it faithfully, as God's steward, for the good of men and the kingdom of Christ; but let him limit his desires as Christ has limited his prayers. So this petition is a daily rebuke of the craving which ever cries, "MORE, MORE," and is never satisfied. It reiterates daily the caution of Jesus, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." It reminds us daily that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

4. We must be *content with the supply of our real wants*. If this petition for daily bread is answered, we must not murmur for the lack of more. "Having food and raiment," says Paul, "let us be therewith content." "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This must have been a hard lesson for Paul—as hard as for you or me; and the situations of privation, peril, imprisonment, suffering, in which he often was were much more trying than ours have ever been; but he had learned the lesson well. He wrote that sentence while a prisoner at Rome. Shall we then be discontented, or fret against the Lord, if he gives us

our daily bread? We have then all that Jesus has taught us to pray for. His kindness prevents our suffering, except from discontent; and that is self-inflicted torture. Nor let us borrow discontent from dreaded want on the morrow. We are taught to ask each day only for what we need that day. "Give us *this day* our daily bread." We have no warrant for asking God to give us to-day a deposit of good things for to-morrow's use. We are apt to feel that if we have nothing on hand for the future we have abundant cause for anxiety; but we shall be just as dependent on God when the future comes, whether we are penniless to-day or have our accumulated millions. If God does not give us each day our daily bread, we shall not have it. He may give it from resources which we have laid up and call our own, or he may give it in some other way; but, in either case, it will be he that gives it. The universe is his treasure-house; all its atoms and all its laws are under his control, and those who, *while faithful in duty*, diligent in business, sowing in seed-time, reaping in harvest, trust in him have nothing to fear. To-day, to-morrow, every day, — the needful supply will come, and we may lay ourselves calmly to rest, though our purse is empty, and our last barrel of meal exhausted, and our last cruse of oil failed. To-morrow, if we live so long, we will rise and pray, "Give us *this day* our daily bread," and the prayer will be answered. One of the commentators curiously explains the word translated "daily," and which I have explained as meaning "necessary," as if it meant to-morrow, and says this is the sense of the petition, "Give us this day the food for to-morrow," and then adds this remark: "When we have enough for to-day, but nothing at all for to-morrow, we are in a state of the extremest torture. . . Let a man suppose himself suddenly bereft of the means of subsistence, with no store and no prospect for the future; the situation is surely an unpleasant one, and, much as he may struggle against it, will not leave him without care — nay, will cause him sleepless nights." But this "torture," this "care," these "sleepless nights," are just what Jesus rebukes, and what trust in God would prevent. "Be, then, content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'" "He feeds

the fowls of the air ; shall he not much more feed you?" "He clothes the lilies of the field ; shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" "Therefore be not anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?' for your Father knoweth that ye need all these things."

5. We should be *grateful to God for our daily bread*. It is a *gift*, not a *debt*;—a gift for which we should be thankful. How unworthy, how mean, to ask God for gifts, while we are receiving, from day to day, these very gifts without thanksgiving. We are prone to limit our gratitude to signal displays of God's beneficence. The still, small voice of love in which he daily whispers wakens in us no whispering response of gratitude. His zephyrs breathe hourly upon us, but find no Eolian harp that wakes to grateful melody. Oh! why, ungrateful man, when God sends his mercies new every morning, do you not send him every morning your tribute of gratitude? Is it because he does not give you all you wish? But he does give you all that is for your highest good. Perhaps all you wish would ruin you. Perhaps he withholds in love, just as a loving father will not give his little child a razor or a loaded pistol, however piteously the child may cry for it. But he has supplied all your real wants. From infancy till now he has fed and clothed you. Perhaps he has not permitted you to lay up a store for coming years. Say, rather, for years that may *not* come to you and yours; for who knows how soon he will be startled by the cry, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee"? But every morning he has sent the manna, sweet and nourishing, for the day. Do you owe him no thanks for this? Oh! is it manly to neglect to thank the great Giver for the little rill which has flowed constantly in verdure by your door, bearing a supply for every need? Must God pour on you a Niagara of the good things of this world, enough to drown you in destruction and perdition, before you think of thanking him?

6. In praying for temporal as well as for spiritual blessings, we must *remember the wants of our fellow-men*. We belong to the brotherhood of man. We may not say, "Give me my portion and let every other man ask for his." In

brotherly kindness, each must ask for all and all for each, "Give *us our* daily bread." An argument has been drawn from this in favor of daily family prayer. "Our Saviour," it is said, "clearly designed that Christians who live together should pray together every day. He took it for granted that they would daily gather about the domestic altar, and say, '*Our* Father in heaven, supply *this* day our wants.' Every family, as a family, has wants which God only can supply, and it is fitting that as a family they should express these wants in prayer. This they should do daily, and not once a week, on Sunday only; for the prayer is not 'Give us this week our weekly bread,' and that religion which, in its inward exercises or its outward manifestations, is confined to the Sabbath is not worth much to its possessors or to anybody else, for this world or the world to come." I feel the force of these considerations. There should be daily family prayer in every household. But the Saviour here is counselling his disciples mainly in regard to closet devotion. "When thou prayest, enter thy closet and say, '*Our* Father, give *us* this day our daily bread.'" Never, even in your secret devotions, lose sight of your brethren in want, but then and there kindle the flames of your charity. Make their wants your own. Pray for them as for yourself. You may be rich, but bring, in thought, your poverty-stricken brother to your side, and pray, "*Our* Father, give *us* this day *our* daily bread." Think not of your family only, but of the whole family of man, of this great brotherhood of the race, many of them toiling for their daily bread, and suffering for the want of it, and then offer the prayer of the text, and ask whether you have not something else to do for them besides praying. We must all be brought to feel the great truth that, in society as well as in the church, we are every one members one of another, so united by the ties of mutual dependence that if one member suffers all the members suffer with it; and this truth is impressed on us whenever we intelligently offer the petition, "Give *us*"—not give me—"this day *our*"—not my—"daily bread." I close with three remarks.

1. Prayer does not supersede the necessity of labor. A Servian proverb says, "The vineyard wanted not prayer, but

the hoe." This may be a good or a bad proverb, wise or unwise, as it is understood. If it is taken to mean that we should hoe without praying, then it is bad, unwise; for work without prayer is quite as dangerous as prayer without work. It shuts God out from our daily concerns, and expects success in them without his blessing. But there is wisdom in the proverb, if understood as rebuking the folly of praying without working. But the vineyard needs both prayer and the hoe, both God's blessing and man's work. We see readily enough, in temporal matters, that our work cannot be dispensed with. He would be justly deemed a fit candidate for an insane asylum who should act upon the fancy that, having prayed for his daily bread, he need not labor for it. We know that if God answers that prayer, it will be, not without, but through, our own exertions, and we never dream of putting forth one effort less because we have prayed. If we understand our prayer aright, we do not ask that we may eat the bread of idleness; but that God would give us the chance to toil, and the will to toil, and the skill to toil, and the fruits of toil; and we rise from our knees to do whatsoever our hand findeth to do. So the shipwrecked mariner prays for help, but does not relax one effort to save himself. He feels that God's help will come, if at all, not without, but through, his own exertions; and he works all the more hopefully for having prayed. The true principle is that *in all things* prayer and work must go together. Yet how strangely is it overlooked! Many labor for temporal blessings without prayer, and pray for spiritual blessings without labor. Both are wrong. It is as great a mistake to pray for spiritual blessings without suitable effort as it would be to pray for a harvest without sowing or reaping. "*Ora et labora.*" Pray and work. Nothing in the nature of either forbids their union. United, they help each other. The Christian's fervent prayer begets honest work, his faithful work throws him back upon prayer. Pray, then, and labor. When you pray for growth in grace, or for the conversion of sinners, or for a revival of religion, labor for it.

2. Leave the supply of all future wants with God. Man has a passion for accumulation. He wants to lay up a stock

for future needs, and, if he has no such stock, he lives in dread of coming poverty. It is not enough that God promises the manna shall fall daily — he fears starvation to-morrow unless he has some manna in store; and so he trusts more in his little accumulation than in God's promises. We see this tendency in spiritual as well as in temporal things. Grace for to-day does not satisfy many. They want to lay up grace for future trials. Some seem more anxious about that than to obtain and use the grace they need to-day. Now the text brings to light a principle of God's administration applicable to all things. We are not to ask nor expect to-day the food for body or soul that we shall need to-morrow. We must wait till to-morrow before we trouble ourselves about to-morrow's needs. If we had to-morrow's grace to-day, we could not use it till to-morrow. Why not leave it, then, in God's hands to dispense it as we need it? It will be as safe with him as with us. Yet how many distress themselves, because they do not now feel prepared for coming trials! In health, the Christian looks on the sick and *feels* that now he has not himself grace for such a trial. But he is not sick now. His question is whether he has grace for the duties of health — for to-day. Why desire a sick man's food or medicine, when he is not sick? Why be distressed because he has not to-day the needful bread for to-morrow, or some unknown future day? He could not use it to-day if he had it. So the Christian sometimes dreads the hour of death, because he has not now the strength he will need then. But he is not dying now. His present duty is not to die, but to live unto the Lord, and he has grace enough, if he has enough for that. Let him ask daily for his daily bread, for body and for soul; and he may be assured that, whether he is sick or well, in joy or in sorrow, whether called to the loss of friends or himself to die, as his day his strength shall be.

3. Finally, pray earnestly for the food of the soul. Some commentators explain the text as referring wholly to spiritual food. I cannot accept this interpretation; but neither can I help the thought that if it is essential that the food of the body be daily given, it is not less essential that the soul's food be constantly supplied. We cannot make the

body immortal. Care for it as we may, it will decay; but the soul will live. And there is food for that, needful not for its being, but for its well-being. You remember the great Teacher's words, "Labor not for the food that perishes." The food perishes, and so does the body which it feeds. Let not that, then, be the great aim of your labors, "but labor for that food which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give unto you." There is much that is saddening in this world, but nothing more so than to see men so eager in their pursuit of provisions for the body, while they neglect the soul. I do not know whether you pray for your daily bread. I know most of you labor for it. That is right. But do you not neglect the soul? I see you, in the business of the world, full of life and animation. Fatigue does not dishearten you; but when the fatigues of one day are alleviated by rest, you start anew to toil. You plan and labor for the meat that perisheth, you toil to increase these treasures which you must soon leave. I find no fault with that. But oh! some of you have never thought, nor planned, nor done so much, in all your life, to secure your soul's welfare, as during the past week for this world. Is this wise? Is this worthy of you? I do not blame your labor for food for the body. This you must have, and you must work for it. But the folly is this—that you neglect the soul, that the business of this world so absorbs you that you leave no time, nor thought, nor energy for eternal interests. There is food for the soul, of which, if a man eat, he shall live forever. Oh! then, pray, labor, for that living bread. It may be yours. For Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst."

VII.

MATTHEW vi. 12.

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

WE have considered that petition of the Lord's Prayer which asks for daily bread. We come now to petitions pertaining to higher wants, to soul wants. Of these the first is for the forgiveness of our sins; for this is our first and most urgent want as sinners. The Saviour here teaches that just as truly as every man needs daily bread, so truly does every one need daily pardon. He assumes the fact of our sinfulness as a fact to which the conscience of every one of us testifies. The preceding petitions have been preparing for this. We begin our prayer by calling God our Father; but what unloving, ungrateful, disobedient children we have been! We pray that his name may be hallowed; but have we always hallowed it, and treated God, and all that pertained to God, with due reverence? We pray that his kingdom may come; but have we not rebelled against our heavenly King? We pray that his will may be done in earth as it is in heaven; but how often have we murmured against his will when it has laid suffering upon us, and refused to obey it when it has set duty before us. We pray that he will give us our daily bread; but with what ingratitude have we received the gifts of his providence! Yes, it is time for the petition, "*Forgive us our debts.*"

I. Two words here may need explanation; viz., "debts" and "forgive." In the pecuniary sense, we all know what a debt is; but with God we have no pecuniary transactions, and the word must be used here in a figurative sense. It is explained in the parallel passage in Luke's Gospel, where the petition reads, "*Forgive us our sins,*" and in the fourteenth and

fifteenth verses of this chapter, where our Lord, in expanding the idea of the text, uses the word "trespasses," or, as the same Greek word is elsewhere rightly translated, "transgressions." Now a man who has sinned, who has transgressed God's law, has done something far worse than the mere contracting of an honest debt. Still the term "debt" is a striking figurative expression for sins, and it is the one wisely chosen by our great Teacher to be used by us in our daily prayers; and that man must be a bold one who will presume to alter it. It involves the following ideas: First, God has rightful claims on us, we owe him perfect and constant obedience, it is his due; secondly, we have not met these claims as they became due, have not paid God the obedience we owed, and in respect to these just dues we are greatly in arrears, and these arrears in duty have been constantly accumulating; and, thirdly, in default of obedience, we may be said to owe him punishment for these arrears in duty; and, fourthly, as none but the creditor can remit a debt, so none but God can remit the penalty which we owe for sin. When, therefore, we pray, "Forgive us our debts," we confess that we have failed to meet God's claims on us as they became due; in other words, that we have committed sins that deserve punishment.

The word "forgive" should need but little explanation. Its synonyms are "pardon," "remit." To forgive a debt, in the literal sense, is to release the debtor from the obligation to pay the debt. To forgive a sin is to release the sinner from the obligation to suffer the punishment deserved for sin, and to restore him to all the blessings forfeited by transgression. Forgiveness is the full and free remission of penalty. When, therefore, we ask God to forgive us our debts, we ask him to release us from the penalty due to us for sin, and to feel as kindly towards us, and to treat us as kindly, as if we had not sinned. We ask him to deal with us, not as we deserve, but infinitely better than we deserve.

But does not the Bible teach that God will deal with every man, judge him, reward him, render to him according to his deeds? Yes; but, under an economy of grace, this is a very different thing from dealing with every man according to his deserts; for repentance and faith are acts, deeds, which God

follows with forgiveness. God, therefore, under the gospel, treats every man according to his deeds when he punishes every incorrigible sinner in proportion to his guilt, and forgives every repenting, believing sinner, releasing him from merited penalty. But he treats no sinner whom he forgives according to his deserts. Hence it is said that, being justified by faith in Jesus, we shall be *saved from wrath through him*. "Repent and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out*," the charges against you cancelled, you released from the obligation to pay your lawful debts. Forgiveness, then, is a real remission of penalty. You would not tell a man who had paid the last cent, principal and interest, that now you forgave him the debt. Forgive him! No! he has paid the debt, and there is nothing to forgive. It were insulting to tell a prisoner, released after the just term of his imprisonment had been passed, that now the State pardoned him. "Pardon me!" he might say. "I ask no pardon now; I have served my time out; and, if I were to be kept in prison another day, I should suffer injustice." Yet there are men who tell us that every sinner is punished to the full extent of his deserts, and then forgiven by God. We are taught, according to this view, to pray that God will forgive sins which he fully punishes, and then to thank him for the exceeding riches of his grace in granting such a pardon. The gospel does not present any such absurd and contradictory notions as these. In teaching us to pray for forgiveness, it bids us ask for deliverance from the penalty we have deserved — that debts we can never pay may be remitted. "The debt of sin," says Leighton, "being the tie to punishment which follows upon it, the forgiving of a sin can be no other than the acquitting of a man from that curse, setting him free from his debt, his engagement to suffer; and therefore to imagine a forgiveness of sin with retaining of the punishment is direct nonsense, and a contradiction."

II. *In what spirit should we offer this petition?* The text itself teaches us that we must offer it with forgiveness to those who have injured us. "Forgive us our debts *as we forgive our debtors*." I must reserve this topic for future consideration. In addition to this we learn, from reason and from other parts of Scripture, that we should offer this petition —

1. *With the feeling that we deserve punishment for our sins* — that the debts are not only large, but just. If you deserve no punishment you need no forgiveness, and it is a meanness in yourself, and an insult to God, to ask forgiveness. Yet how often do men speak these words without realizing that they have done anything that merits punishment! What but a form and a mockery is this petition as they offer it? While the lips say, "Forgive us our debts," the heart is saying, "We have done nothing that calls for forgiveness. Give us *justice*. If God is just, he will make us happy." Can such a way of saying prayers please God or profit us? If you obtain forgiveness, not the lips only but the heart must ask for it; and this it cannot do unless it confesses its desert of punishment.

2. In offering this petition, *we must realize that we can do nothing to merit forgiveness*. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of meriting forgiveness, for forgiveness is the remission of merited penalty. It is treating one better than he merits. A man may indeed do what a wise government, or a wise parent, may deem a good reason for pardoning him, rendering it fit and proper; but in all cases the act of remission is one of unmerited favor. Especially must this be so under the government of God; for he requires at every moment all our heart and all our service. *That, all that, is his due*. There is no room here, and no possibility, for works of supererogation. No man, therefore, can accumulate a stock of goodness to pay off old debts with. They must be gratuitously forgiven, or not at all. No man can repent deeply enough to merit forgiveness; and if he thought he had so repented, that thought would corrupt and spoil his repentance. The deeper his repentance, the more deeply he feels that forgiveness must be a free gift of God's infinite grace. Tholuck quotes from an ancient and bitter opponent of Christianity, Apollonius of Tyana, this prayer: "O ye gods! give me my dues, pay me my debts." Here spoke the pride of the unrenewed heart. It is a shocking prayer. What would be a man's just dues from God? Not heaven surely, not even the blessings of this life, but the death which is the wages of sin. Coleridge said forcibly that the man who expects to merit heaven by his goodness had

better begin by meriting earth. Christ teaches us not to say proudly, "O God, give us our dues," but to say humbly, "Our Father in heaven, forgive us our debts." When David prayed for forgiveness, his plea was, "Have mercy on me, O God; *according to thy loving-kindness*, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." This plea of a contrite heart availed with God.

3. The prayer for forgiveness *implies sorrow for wrongdoing*. Yet persons often pray; or think they pray, for forgiveness, who are wholly destitute of that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation. They feel unfortunate rather than blameworthy. They are sorry, if at all, not that they have sinned, but that they are exposed to punishment; not that they have deserved the penalty of the law, but that they are likely to feel it; not that they are so wicked, such sinners as they are, but that God is so holy that he must punish such sinners. They have none of that godly sorrow which grieves for sin less in view of coming retribution than in view of the sinner's own ill-deservings. Is this genuine prayer for forgiveness? Would it satisfy a father, were his son to say, "Father, forgive me," and then to add, "I am not sorry I did it. I regret the consequences of my fault to myself, but the badness of it, the insult thus given to thee, I care nothing about"? Now what is the difference between this supposed case and the case of the sinner who utters the text without any genuine sorrow for sin? Simply this: that in the one case the feelings of the soul are expressed in words, and in the other case only seen by the eye of God. In every case of true repentance, there is sorrow for sin, not lessened, but even increased, by the assurance of forgiveness. So Paul spake with the deepest sorrow of his sin, when not a doubt lingered in his mind that a crown of life would be his.

4. We must offer this petition *with sincere purposes to renounce our sins*. The prayer for forgiveness involves the promise of amendment, at least of honest efforts for amendment. If a neighbor had robbed your store last night, and to-day should piteously beg for forgiveness, and to-night attempt to repeat the crime, you would regard him as all the more guilty for his piteous begging for pardon. If any criminal,

after petitioning for pardon and obtaining it, should at the next opportunity repeat the crime, he would be counted worthy of much sorer punishment. In all such cases, we recognize in the request for pardon an implied expression of sorrow for the past, and an implied promise of amendment in the future; and if the promise is not sincere, then the guilt of hypocrisy is added to the guilt of other sins. So in respect to offences against God. If to-night we implore forgiveness for the sins of to-day, and go forth to-morrow, not to renounce them, nor to struggle against them, but to repeat them, then we contract a double guilt, — the guilt, first, of the sins themselves, and the guilt, secondly, of mocking God by asking him to forgive sins which it is not our purpose and our effort to abandon.

People sometimes say, "Why, I repent every day; I never sin without repenting." But is your repentance a loathing of sin and a turning from sin? When you ask God to forgive you, do you mentally form the purpose to go and sin no more? and beseech God to help you keep it? If you were dishonest yesterday, and last night asked God to forgive you, did you do it hating that act? and do you now feel that you are bound, not only by the divine command, but also by your own prayers, never, while life shall last, to do another dishonest act? If you prayed last evening that God would forgive your neglect of duty, was it with the purpose never again, God helping you, to be negligent in that matter? and do you feel to-day doubly bound by your own confession and prayer to do that duty faithfully? If not, what is your repentance good for? What will that prayer for forgiveness avail? If there be such a thing as the sorrow of the world which worketh death, this is it. If there be incense which is abomination to the Lord, this is it. Your repentance must change the current of your life, or it will be classed with that of Judas, who repented himself, hanged himself, and went to his own place! Do you say, "If the case be so, I will stop all religious exercises and go on in careless sin"? Hear me, my friend. The state of mind which can entertain such a thought must be one of alienation from God. Hear me again. Are you so averse to God's service that the declaration that words before him, without corresponding purposes and deeds, are not acceptable to

him will drive you from him in a rage? Hear me yet again. This determination that you will have no more to do with prayer, if prayer without amendment of life is not pleasing to God, is not a safe one, — it is full of danger. Its results will not be happy. It will not lead to heaven. It leads in a very different direction. A better resolution would be to renounce sin and turn to God, and implore his Holy Spirit to aid you in your struggles with temptation.

5. We must offer this petition *with faith in Jesus*. This is not, like the other dispositions I have named, implied in the petition itself. Reason teaches us that, if we pray for forgiveness, we must have these dispositions. It might even go further and suggest that if, under God's government, there is any such thing as forgiveness, there must be *some atonement*. But, in reference to Christ's work and Christ's death, reason, till it has taken lessons of revelation, has nothing to say. It says nothing of Christ or of faith in Christ. But the New Testament is full of this subject. It everywhere asserts that, if men are forgiven and saved, it is for Christ's sake. This great truth, then, of Christ's propitiation for sin, which alone makes forgiveness possible, underlies this petition. If you ask me why this great truth is not clearly enunciated in the prayer itself which Christ taught as the prophet of his Church, I reply that the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ had not yet, at this early stage in the history of Jesus, been fully unfolded. The Old Testament had indeed, by its sacrifices and its rites and its prophecies, foreshadowed the life and work of Jesus. John the Baptist had pointed to him as the one to whom all the prophets gave witness, and in whom all the types received their fulfilment, in the significant words, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus himself, in private conference with Nicodemus, had spoken, in words which are embalmed in the heart of the Church, of God's great love to the world in sending his Son to save it; but it was not till the sacrifice was completed at Golgotha that these teachings were understood in their grand import even by the disciples of Jesus. Hence it was not till the very night before his crucifixion, almost three years after he gave them this prayer, that he distinctly taught them

to ask in his name. Those earlier instructions were like those which a parent gives his children — not full developments of the subjects they treat of, but adapted to the capacities of the children, and imparted as they are able to bear. As they learn more, these first lessons will be understood in the light of later disclosures. When the Saviour taught this prayer, he saw clearly his agony at Gethsemane and his death at Calvary, and recognized in this great work of his, in this propitiation which he should make, the only plea for our pardon; and he knew too that after that passion was completed his disciples would, when they offered this petition, look back to the same scenes on which his prophetic eye was fixed, and think of that blood of atonement which he shed for the remission of sins. We well know, my friends, that if we pray effectually for forgiveness we pray in the name of Jesus. We know that all well-grounded hope of pardon rests on that work which Jesus wrought for us when he bore our sins. And here is the firmest ground of hope. What an advocate with the Father have we in Jesus! What sovereign efficacy to wash away our sins in his atoning blood!

III. Let us look at some of *the motives* which should induce us rightly to offer this petition. These are many, but the chief of them may be summed up under the three following heads:—

1. It is *reasonable* to ask forgiveness of God. We have sinned against him, and it is plain that he who has wronged another should in some way ask forgiveness for the wrong. When the prodigal returns to his father confessing his guilt and pleading for pardon, we feel that this is reasonable, that it is the first reasonable thing he has done since he asked for his portion of goods and left his father's house. And the first reasonable thing the sinner does, in his relations to God, is to confess his sins and implore forgiveness.

2. Consider the *value of this blessing*. How shall we estimate its worth? Think of the greatness of the debt. In the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus represents the servant's debt to his lord, which corresponds to our debt to God, as ten thousand talents. The sum is enormous, equal in our currency, according to the estimate of some, to fifteen millions

of dollars; and the poor man had nothing to pay. So with us. Our debt is enormous, and we have nothing to pay. Try to estimate your mighty arrears in duty — the number and the greatness of your sins of omission and commission. But pardon cancels the whole of this mighty debt.

Or, regard pardon as deliverance from the condemning sentence of the law. We can only learn the worth of such a deliverance by knowing the fearfulness of the punishment from which we are delivered, the height and depth and breadth and length of such a passage as this: "He that believeth not is condemned already. He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Think of it — "*the wrath of God abideth on him.*" Remember, too, that unless God first forgives he can give us nothing that will be a real and lasting benefit. Without forgiveness there is no real blessing for us. Is pardon the restoration of the lost favor of God? Then its worth is beyond all price. To know that God is offended with us, and that we have given him reason to be so, ought deeply to pain us; for it implies that we can have no spiritual communion with him, no delightful consciousness of his favor, no joy in his presence. A child who has offended his father esteems it an object greatly to be desired to regain the father's lost favor. His heart thrills with joy when the father says, "My son, I freely forgive you." He has regained peace of mind, hope, love, and perhaps a forfeited inheritance. The moment of supreme joy in the history of the prodigal son must have been the moment when his father so cordially welcomed and so freely forgave him. Oh, "blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"! Says Dr. William R. Williams, "Let God withhold what he may of worldly good, — health, knowledge, freedom, and honor, — if he but grant the pardon of sins, the renewal of the heart, and acceptance in the day of the Lord Jesus. If he but forgive, though he give not, then all earthly losses and crosses, however severe, however many, and however long, are but the brief and salutary pain inflicted by the skilful oculist as he touches the cataract, — a sharp pang, but soon over, and letting in at last, on the sufferer's eye, the flood of new-born day. But if, on the other hand, my grovelling

and covetous heart choose earth and slight the skies, if I virtually say to God, ‘*Give*, only give, and I care not to have thee *forgive*,’ then all my treasures, and raptures, and achievements here are but as the tuft of grass which the ox snatches by the wayside as it is driven unconsciously to the shambles — a morsel whose sweetness is not long to be enjoyed, and that will not ward off the fatal death-stroke or lull the agonies of approaching dissolution.”

If we consider this blessing in the light of the cross, we have a yet higher proof of its worth. *Why does the Son of God die?* His answer is, “This is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many *for the remission of sins*.” It was to render pardon possible and safe. But you say that you do not see the necessity for such a sacrifice in order that sin might be pardoned. My only reply now is, that *God did* see this necessity. Friends, go learn in the sufferings of that illustrious Victim, God’s estimate of the evil of sin, and of the worth of pardon. And yet you value the blessing at so low a rate that you will not even ask for it in the only spirit in which you could hope to gain it. But ere long your estimates on this subject will undergo a sudden change. When eternity opens before you, when your sins glare in the light of the judgment-throne, then these things which now engage your eager pursuit will appear to be worthless, and the pardon you now despise will appear to be of infinite value.

3. Consider, finally, *the encouragement the Bible gives that you will obtain the blessing, if you ask for it*. On no subject do the sacred writers expend more strength than on the effort to convince sinners that God is willing to forgive. See how God himself repeats and varies the expression when he proclaims his name. “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” See how, by the prophet Isaiah, he declares that he “will *abundantly* pardon.” Read the promises of the gospel, and see how they pledge his veracity to bestow forgiveness on all who rightly ask for it. Read the invitations of the gospel, and see how God tries to draw you to himself by the offers of a free and a full forgiveness. Read the

entreaties of the gospel, and see how anxious your heavenly Father is to have the opportunity of forgiving you! Contemplate, above all, the work of Jesus which lies at the foundation of all these promises and invitations, and see what sacrifices God has made to open for you the way of forgiveness. Is there not, in all this, enough to encourage you to ask for pardon? What guilty fears are these which bar you from his mercy-seat? Are your sins great? Behold, where sin abounds grace shall much more abound. Are your sins peculiar? So is his mercy — the wonder of the universe. Are your sins many? He will abundantly pardon. Is there not also attractive power enough in this aspect of a sin-forgiving God to draw you to him? See him now offering to forgive, now beseeching you to seek forgiveness. Come, then, and accept the proffered and priceless boon. Say to everything that would detain you, "Hinder me not, for I am going to get my pardon; I am going to be reconciled to God. World, with all thy pleasures and all thy treasures, solicit me no more; you are worth nothing compared with God's lost favor, which I am going to regain. Companions in sin, hinder me not, but go with me to the mercy-seat. We have sinned together, let us repent together and be pardoned together; but if you will not go, I must leave you, for God's favor is worth infinitely more than your friendship. Sins, long cherished, hinder me not, loosen your hold. I renounce you forever, and fly to God for pardon. I forsake everything that would hinder my approach to the mercy-seat, and to that I flee, as the last and sure refuge of my guilty soul." Yes, my friend, go, go; for Jesus calls. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

VIII.

MATTHEW vi. 12.

“And forgive us our debts AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.”

THE word “debts” in this petition denotes obligations unfulfilled, sins as against God, injuries as against ourselves. The gospel does not require us in ordinary cases to forgive debts in the pecuniary sense. These we have a right to collect, but not in doing it to distress the poor, or the widow, or the fatherless. If misfortune has put it out of the power of a debtor to pay his debt, we must treat him with the greatest leniency, wait long for him, give up cheerfully in some cases a part or the whole of the debt, or — what would often be much better — put him in the way of helping himself out of his difficulty. This the spirit of the gospel plainly requires. But the text refers chiefly, not to debts in this literal sense, but to offences against our persons, our feelings, or our reputation. “Our debtors” are those who, in any way, have wronged us. Such is the world that no one can live long in it without receiving injuries, or what he deems such. Men slander us, misrepresent our opinions or our conduct; impeach our motives, defraud us of our rights. My object in this discourse is to inquire, in the light of the text, what feelings and conduct the gospel requires of us towards those who have wronged us.

1. *The gospel forbids us to return injury for injury.* The first impulse of the human heart is to repay one who has wronged us in his own coin. If a man strikes us, we feel like striking him; if he slanders us, we feel like defaming him; if he treats us unkindly, we are prone to treat him so; and if he hurts our interests, we wish to hurt his. This is the rude impulse of the sense of justice, largely mingled with selfishness. But

Jesus forbids its indulgence. "Ye have heard that it has been said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth;' but I say unto you that ye resist not evil." He exemplified his teaching in his life; and the apostle Peter points to him as our example in this very respect. "Christ has suffered for us, setting us an example, that we should follow his steps; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." And all through the epistles we meet with such passages as the following: "Recompense to no man evil for evil;" "See that none render evil for evil to any man;" "Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing."

But is there no exception or limitation? No, none at all. You may defend yourself when attacked—it is your right, and may be your duty; but this right and duty is limited to *self-defence*. When that is secured, you may not strike a blow, lift a finger, or say a word, in the way of retaliation. Cases also occur in which, for the *good of society*, we may and should cause a wrong-doer to feel the force of the law. But even in such cases we must not do anything for the purpose of gratifying our revenge. The protection of society from similar wrongs must be our motive, and as citizens it is our right, and it may be our duty, to afford to society this protection. Yet it is difficult for us, when we have been wronged, to enter a complaint or to appear as a witness against the wrong-doer, without feeling something like a personal gratification, not simply that justice is to be done, and society to be benefited, but also that our enemy is to suffer for wronging us. When therefore we feel impelled to appear in any such position, it is doubly necessary that we keep our hearts with all diligence, and pray to be filled with God's spirit of love.

2. The gospel forbids us to *cherish feelings of revenge towards those that injure us*. It is not enough that we refrain from the retaliating act; we must also banish the revengeful feeling. The gospel no more gives us liberty to hate our brother in our hearts than it does to smite him with our fists, or wound his reputation with our tongues. It even tells us that he who hateth his brother is a murderer, and cannot have eternal life, because he has a murderer's heart. Yet how keen is man's relish for revenge, and how he cherishes the re-

vengeful spirit, even when restrained from acting out this spirit in retaliating acts! Now God is not satisfied with this. This root of bitterness must be eradicated from the soul. No wrath, no malice, no hatred, not an unkind feeling, may be harbored within, however great the wrong we have received.

3. *The gospel requires us to love those who have wronged us.* "Ye have heard," says Jesus, "that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;' but I say unto you, '*Love your enemies.*'" It is not enough to free ourselves of hatred and malice and revenge; we must *love* those that hate us. But how can we do this? How can we love the man who stands before us as a treacherous friend, an injurious neighbor, a malignant slanderer, a blood-thirsty persecutor? Does not the gospel command an impossibility when it bids us love our enemies? By no means. Yet there is a difficulty here which a few words of explanation may remove. There are two kinds of affection which we call love. The one—sometimes called the love of complacency or moral esteem—is the affection which we feel towards one whose character and conduct please us; the other—sometimes called the love of benevolence or good-will—is the affection which we are bound to feel towards every being that is capable of happiness. The former is exercised in view of character and conduct which we regard as lovely—which pleases, delights us; the latter, simply in view of capacity for happiness and holiness. We love some souls as pure and lovely souls; others simply as souls. We love some spirits as *choice* spirits, spirits whom we would choose as the companions of our spirits; others we should love simply as spirits, fallen, indeed, but capable of being restored to the image and blessedness of God. Now it is impossible to love the conduct that wrongs us, or the character from which such conduct flows; and if it were possible, it would not be right. But here is a caution to be carefully noted. When one has wronged us, or we think he has, our selfishness blinds us to his real worth. We look at him only in the light of that supposed wrong, and we can see no good in him. We misjudge his motives, and if some of his deeds should appear good to others, and actually be good, we attribute them to some base intentions. The memory of that

wrong, real or fancied, colors every one of his actions to our sight. Now all this is contrary to the spirit of the gospel. It is the estimate of pride and selfishness, not of unselfish love. We have no right, under the influence of selfish, revengeful feeling, so to misjudge a man. He is doubtless a much better man, his character much less unlovely, than we are willing to allow. But supposing him to be destitute of all claim to our moral esteem, is there nothing about him for us to love? He may not be a pure, holy, lovely soul; but he is a soul, made in God's image, and capable through grace of being restored to the image of God's holiness. He is capable of happiness; and we should wish him such a character that he may be blessed here and hereafter. He is making himself wretched by his sin, and we must view him with compassion, and desire his return to virtue, that so he may return to bliss. While therefore we must not and cannot love him with the love of complacency, which delights in his character and person, if his character is wholly unlovely, we can and must love him with the love of benevolence, which seeks his good, whatever his character and his treatment of us may be. Fallen though he may be, he is a soul that God made and Christ redeemed. God loved him and us when we were yet sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, and so in character unlovely, hateful to his holy heart. He loved us, not as lovely souls, but as souls, not as pure spirits, but as spirits made in his image, that had fallen and lost their birthright and their blessedness, and that were worth saving. So should we love the most unworthy and unlovely of those who hate and wrong us.

4. *The gospel bids us do those that wrong us all the good we can.* The Saviour not only says, "Love your enemies," but also, "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "If," says Paul, "thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Thus the gospel not only forbids unkind acts and

feelings towards those who wrong us, but it requires us to love them and do them all the good we can. "If one treats us unkindly, we must treat him well. If he defames us, we must say the kindest possible things of him. If he hurts our interests, we must seek to advance his. If he exposes our faults, we must try to cover his. If he will not oblige us, we must do kindnesses to him. If he deals reproach and curses, we must bless him in return; and when he does his worst to hurt us, we must do our best to benefit him."

5. *The gospel bids us pray for those that wrong us.* Often this is all they will let us do for them. They would rather starve than take food from us; they would rather suffer anything than let us relieve their suffering. But they cannot prevent our praying for them in secret and in silence. And God loves to see his children repaying with prayer — genuine, earnest, *loving* prayer — the wrongs that have been done to them. So Jesus prayed for those who nailed him to the cross, and mocked him in his hour of mortal agony. So Stephen prayed for his murderers, and God opened to his view the glories of heaven. And, my friends, if ever we should be wronged and insulted, let our first mental act be a prayer for him that did it; and as soon as we can find a place of retirement, let us pour into the ears of God our earnest prayer that he will grant to that offender the richest blessings. If you name no other person in prayer, let your enemy be so named.

6. *The gospel bids us forgive those that wrong us as soon as they give evidence of repentance.* If forgiveness implies the full restoration of confidence and affection, if it implies that we feel towards a wicked offender and treat him in all respects as if he had never offended, then I do not think we can do it, or ought to do it, unless he shows some evidence of repentance. We can and should love him, and try to do him good, and pray for him. We can and should exercise a forgiving spirit, and stand ever ready, as God does, to forgive; but in the full and broad sense of forgiveness, in which we take an offender back into our full confidence and esteem, I do not think we can do it, or are required to do it, till he shows some sign of penitence. "If," says the great Teacher, "thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and *if he repent*,

forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again, saying, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." There are other passages, indeed, where the duty of forgiveness is enjoined, while the repentance of the offender is not *specified* as a condition. But these passages must be interpreted by the fuller passages in which the condition is specified. The Saviour teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." But God does not forgive our sins while we are impenitent; and if we will not repent, we have no right and no encouragement to ask God to forgive us. If, then, we from the heart forgive every repenting brother, and treat *all* those who have wronged us with love and kindness, praying for them, trying to do them good, removing from our hearts all hatred and revenge, studying by what means and by what divine help we can save and bless them, we need not fear, ourselves being penitent, to offer the petition of the text. Having said thus much on this point, I feel bound to say more, lest we should think our duty narrower than it is. Our duty in this point includes quite as much as most people mean when they say they forgive those that wrong them, and a great deal more than some mean when they say this. We are to imitate God in this matter, and to follow the directions of his Word.

1. We must, then, though ourselves the injured parties, *be willing to be the first to seek reconciliation*. You may not wrap yourself in your dignity, or, what is about the same thing, in your pride, and say, "As soon as he will come and make suitable acknowledgments, as is his duty, I will forgive him." That is his duty, but it is also your duty to seek reconciliation with him by all the means that the wisdom from above can devise. You must try by acts of Christian love to produce in him the penitence which you demand as a prerequisite to your forgiving him. "If," says Jesus, "thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him," but not with harsh words, not in a proud, self-righteous spirit, not in an angry vindictive temper. Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.

So God deals with men. "While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." This ungodly world sent up no cry, "Father, we have sinned—oh, forgive us!" There was no

disposition to make reparation for our wrongs. No! the God we had offended must make the first movement towards reconciliation. By the sacrifice of his Son he removes the obstacles interposed by justice to our pardon, and then tries by all the manifestations of his goodness to melt our hearts to penitence. He beseeches us to be reconciled to him. He is doing all his infinite wisdom will allow to lead us to the repentance which he must demand as the prerequisite to our pardon. Oh! had he waited for us to send to him the voice of supplication and penitence, had he been unwilling to move first in this matter because it was only right and proper that we should, where had we been?

2. *We must be ready to make sacrifices to secure reconciliation.* We must sacrifice at least our pride and our false honor. It may become our duty to sacrifice some of our time, or our ease, or even our property, to bring about a reconciliation even with one who, without the least provocation, has grievously wronged us. It will not do to say, "He has treated me so shamefully as to release me from all obligations to him." Had God said thus, where had we been? We had offended him without the slightest provocation. Yet what sacrifices he made in order to reconcile us to himself! The only thing, so far as we know, that he has ever done that cost him any sacrifice was done for the sake of reconciling a world of sinners to himself. For this he gave his Son to humiliation and agony and death. We can make no *such* sacrifices; but we can, even in this, though at an amazing distance, be followers of God as dear children. And the end is worth the sacrifice. It is to reclaim an offending brother, to lead him to repentance, and so to God and to life. We thus coöperate with God in his work of reclaiming men, and become truly god-like.

3. *We must forgive on the smallest evidence of repentance.* We may not put the offender on a long probation, to make ourselves sure that his repentance is genuine before we forgive; but with the charity that hopeth all things and thinketh no evil, we must forgive him when he professes repentance, unless we have decisive proof that his profession is insincere. This is the nearest approach we can make to God's way of forgiving men. As he forgives as soon as he sees any gen-

uine repentance in the sinner's heart, so we, who cannot read the heart, must forgive so soon as we see, in the words or actions of one who has wronged us, any signs of such repentance. If in this we err, it is on the safe side. If sometimes we should forgive before there is real penitence, we are saved from the worse evil of not forgiving when repentance is genuine. The Saviour expresses this rule very strikingly in a passage which I have already quoted for another purpose. "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, *saying*, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." Here the lowest evidence of repentance that can be given, even a man's own profession, is made the condition on which we must forgive him; and even if on the same day he seven times repeats the offence and the profession of repentance, we must as often repeat the forgiveness. Of course the Saviour assumes that the profession is not made with manifest hypocrisy or mockery.

4. *We must forgive the penitent offender fully.* So we wish God to forgive us, and so he does forgive. But if our neighbor has grievously wronged us, we do not find it easy so to forgive. The spirit of the world says, "Let him smart for it." The natural heart says, "Give me a little sweet revenge." The partially sanctified heart says, "He ought to suffer some, and he shall; then I will forgive." The gospel says, "You must not return him evil for evil, not a small evil for a great one; you must not *taste* the sweet morsel, revenge." "Expose him, at least," whispers revenge. "Expose him confidentially to a few," suggests the partially sanctified heart. "No," replies the gospel, "do not expose him at all, forbear all retaliation, forgive him fully. Take him upon your heart to reclaim him, and *into your heart* as soon as he gives you evidence that he is reclaimed." You wish, my friends, God to grant you a full forgiveness. You would not have him fill your heart with any pain, but the pain of repentance, before he forgives. You would not have him send sorrow after sorrow upon you, to embitter your whole earthly life. Then forgive those who injure you, at once, freely, fully, as you wish God to forgive you.

5. *We must forgive the penitent offender for aggravated*

wrongs. I have said that, whether the wrong-doer is penitent or not, we must seek no retaliation for any wrong, however great, harbor no ill-will, but rather love him, pray for him, and try to do him good. If he is to be punished, *you* are not to do it. "Vengeance is *mine*, — not yours, but *mine*, — I will repay, saith the Lord." I now say that, whenever we have any evidence of repentance, we must freely forgive the greatest wrongs. We sometimes say, "I cannot forgive so base an action. If it were anything but *this* I could forgive it." "Anything but *this*"! Why, *this* is the very offence which God calls upon us to forgive. He does not speak of some imagined wrongs when he bids us forgive, but of the real wrongs that we suffer. Besides, what is to become of you and of me, if God does not forgive great sins? Have we never committed such? Might he not select some acts of our lives and say, "These are so peculiar, so black with ingratitude, so full of condensed wickedness, that I cannot forgive them"? If we cannot forgive great wrongs done to us, how dare we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"?

6. We must forgive the penitent offender for *numerous wrongs*. Remember here, too, that whether he is penitent or not, we must not retaliate nor harbor revengeful feelings, however numerous his wrongs. I now say, "If he *repents*, we must forgive him." We sometimes say, "He has wronged me so deeply and so often that I cannot forgive him." So says our pride. The gospel speaks otherwise. "How often," asked Peter, "shall my brother trespass against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" "I say not," replies the Master, "till seven times, but until seventy times seven." Besides, has any one trespassed against us as many times as we have trespassed against God? "Seven times." "Seventy times seven"! This does not begin to number our sins against God. Perhaps we were violating God's laws all the while this offender was pursuing the course of wrongs of which we complain so bitterly. We cannot forgive him! How, then, *dare* we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"?

Now let me mention briefly a few of the motives to the cultivation of this forgiving spirit.

1. *It is an exalted virtue.* We cannot help admiring — the world has paused to admire — the spirit of Stephen and of Jesus praying for their murderers. Revenge, on the other hand, degrades a man to the level of the original offender. “I will be even with him” is the language of the natural heart. “Yes,” might be the answer, “*just even* with him.” But did it never strike you how degrading it is to make yourself *even* with one whose misdeeds so rouse your wrath? Retaliate, and you make yourself bad as he; but do him good, pray for him, forgive him, and you will rise above him, and come up into the sphere of the godlike virtues.

2. *This is a happy state of mind.* Revengeful men are not happy. “They may gratify malignant passions; but this only stimulates the plague that is raging within them, so that it preys more malignantly on the soul.” There is no sweetness in their lives — it is all bitterness. But there is a real delight in loving an enemy and doing him good, which is akin to the blessedness of God, and sometimes more than compensates for all the wrong we have suffered.

3. *This treatment of an enemy often changes him into a friend.* “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” This treatment may cause him pain, but it is the pain which always attends the passage from wrong to right — the sense of shame, the sense of guilt, the sorrow that worketh repentance unto life. Men may resist wrath, and become more wrathful by retaliation; but kindness and love in return for injury melts the heart, if anything can, into penitence. This is the way to overcome evil — not with evil, but with good.

Finally, *this spirit is a condition of our obtaining forgiveness of God.* I mean just what the Saviour meant when he said, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your trespasses; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Jesus more than once repeated this sentiment, as deeming it of special importance. You remember the parable of the unforgiving servant. Listen to its solemn close: “Then said his master, ‘O thou wicked servant, I forgave

thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee'? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormenters till he should pay all his debt. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from the heart forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Yes, this is God's rule — "Judgment without mercy to him that shows no mercy." *Judgment without mercy* — the law's full, righteous penalty, the death that is the wages of sin. He shall be unblessed by the atonement, unbenefited by the grace of God. So necessary did the Saviour deem it that we should keep this principle in mind, that he interwove it with that short prayer which he left to guide our devotions. "When ye pray, say, 'Father in heaven, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.'" If I forgive, forgive me; if I do not forgive, do not forgive me. Oh! it is a solemn thing to ask God for forgiveness. If we pray as Christ teaches, we cannot ask for pardon without laying aside all hatred and malice and revenge, and filling our hearts with good-will for all that have wronged us. Nor will it avail to avoid *expressing* the condition; for God will remember his rule of procedure if we do not. He has put it into the prayer, not for his sake, but for *ours* — for the purpose of reminding *us* of it every time we pray. And this is his rule for this world, knowing perfectly what it is; and for us, proud, irascible, and passionate as we are, knowing perfectly what we are. How dare you, then, pray for forgiveness with an unforgiving spirit? I should think you would expect to see flashing about you the lightnings of God's righteous wrath. The very throne of grace becomes a throne of judgment to him who, himself implacable, dares to approach it saying, "Forgive us our debts *as* we forgive our debtors;" and on it is written, in characters of vivid light, "He shall have judgment without mercy who hath showed no mercy."

IX.

MATTHEW vi. 13.

"And lead us not into temptation."

THE petition, "Forgive us our debts," is the cry of conscious guilt; the petition, "Lead us not into temptation," is the cry of conscious weakness. When a man's sins are forgiven, he is not beyond the reach of danger. He is in danger of falling into temptations that will prove too strong for him, and into sins which, if they should not destroy his soul, will mar his peace, hurt his usefulness, dishonor his God, and lessen his eternal reward. It is in view of this fact, clearly seen by Christ and often deeply felt by the forgiven sinner, that the great Teacher tells us, after having asked and obtained forgiveness of God, to add, "Lead us not into temptation."

I. *Consider the meaning of this petition.* It cannot, on the one hand, be meant to imply that God ever exerts on any man influences, or surrounds him with temptations, *designed to lead him to sin*, for in this sense God tempteth no man; and let no man, when thus tempted, say that he is tempted by God, or say, when he yields to temptation and falls, that God wished him thus to fall. That were most abhorrent to the nature of God. Nor, on the other hand, can we regard this petition as a prayer that God would take us out of the reach of all temptations. There are temptations "common to man," and which no man, while in this world, can wholly avoid. In sickness and in health, in solitude and in company, in leisure and in business, at home and abroad, in prosperity and in adversity, we are, and so long as we remain on earth we must be, surrounded by objects that furnish the occasions and the solicitations to sin. In every garden there is a tree

laden with forbidden fruit that solicits us to pluck and to eat. This is one of the conditions of our being here; and if we were to pray that we might be placed beyond the reach of all temptation, our prayer could not mean less than that we might die at once. Besides, some temptation is good for us; all the temptation, indeed, that is resisted and overcome helps to strengthen our virtue. "*Blessed*," says the apostle James, "is the man that endureth temptation." "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience." That is, if God in his providence allows you to fall into temptations, or sends trials upon you, rejoice, since through his grace you may derive everlasting benefit from them. Manfully resisted, temptations will invigorate your piety; rightly borne, trials will work in you needful graces which you could not otherwise gain.

What, then, is the meaning of this petition? There are temptations which make a fierce attack upon us, which greatly distress us, and endanger our souls; and we can suppose them so powerful that we should be unable to bear them. We pray in the text that we may not be led into circumstances so distressing and so perilous. This is one class of temptations; the apostle calls them "the fiery darts of the wicked one." There is another class that act on the spiritual system like a slow and insidious poison, or, rather, like that deceptive disease which destroys the lungs and wastes the vital energies, while the hectic flush, often mistaken for the rosy hue of health, is on the cheek, and the eyes are bright, as if the soul looked out joyous from the home in which it loved and meant long to dwell. We pray, when we offer this petition, that we may be protected from influences so seductive and so deadly. We also pray that, in every temptation which God in his wisdom permits to assail us, he will grant us grace to triumph. There is a promise that corresponds to this petition, and explains it: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation open a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Let us consider —

II. *The reasons* for earnestly offering this petition. They are such as these: the power of temptation, the evils of yielding to it, and the willingness of God to help us.

1. *The power of temptation.* Before its sudden assaults or its insidious seductions, the strongest, such as Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, Aaron, David, Elijah, Peter, and a host of others, heroes in the faith, have fallen; and though they have risen again, yet they have borne ever after the scars and the disgrace of their fall. Now since temptation has such power, it is wise to seek God's aid in meeting it. Here is our only security; and if the good and strong men, whose fall we have lamented, had realized their own weakness, and relied on God's grace, they would have remained firm. Tried, they would have been found not wanting. Of the good king Hezekiah it is recorded that in a single matter—an exception to the godly tenor of his history—"God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." He found out what was there—what weakness, what pride, what proneness to wander. He found this out to his disgrace and his cost. There are few of God's children who have not been sometimes left, to show them their weakness, and to lead them to pray more earnestly for God's grace. Especially great is their danger who have been addicted to some vice or sin,—such, for instance, as drunkenness,—and are trying to struggle back to confirmed virtue. Their new purposes are still weak, and in their vitiated constitutions are roots of old habits and long-indulged appetites. All of us who are now in the spiritual conflict are in some degree in this position. Our holy purposes are not yet so confirmed, our habits of sin, our appetites and passions, are not yet so subdued, that we are safe against the force of temptation. We must have God's strength, or we fall.

2. *The evils of yielding to temptation.* No one can foresee all the results of his once sinning. When our first parents sinned they did not, they could not, trace the course of that desolating flood which would flow from this bitter spring over many a century. One thing they knew,—the act was forbidden,—and that should have kept them from it; but they did not, and could not, foresee all its dire results. None but God could know that. Nor does any one of their descendants know what consequences will flow from his once yielding to temptation. This much, however, he may know; not only that the

act is wrong, but also that it will be fraught with evil. How many a young man has been ruined for life by one false step! He took a glass of intoxicating drink to stimulate his drowsy powers, or to drown his sorrow, or to please a companion; it seemed to him a little matter, but the result was that he became a drunkard; and not he alone, but all connected with him, must suffer. He spent an hour in gambling, and started on the career in which he became a gambler with all a gambler's vices. He *borrowed*, as he called it, some of the money of his employer without his employer's leave, and never repaid it, and became a swindler and a thief. When deeply anxious for the welfare of his soul, when the Spirit of God was urging him to Christ, he yielded to the temptation to spend an evening at a dance or a gay party, instead of in a prayer-meeting, or with a wise Christian friend, or alone with his Bible and his God; and the result was that his seriousness left him to return no more, and he is a lost man. Thousands of instances illustrate the point before us. Men, by yielding to temptation, ruin themselves for time and eternity. Nor is this all; the contagion of sin passes from them to others, and thence to others, till hundreds and thousands take it and perish. When yielding they do not dream of such results; for temptation blinds us to the evils and the effects of sin. Nor does the Christian realize the harm he is doing when he sins. It will destroy his peace, grieve his brethren, bring disgrace on the Church, point the cavils of gainsayers, and ruin the souls of men. This might have been saved. Watchfulness and prayer might have preserved him from the temptation, or if this must come, would have secured for him the victory; and the beneficial results might have been such as man can neither number nor measure. Adam yielded to temptation, and a race was ruined. Jesus resisted temptation, and redemption was provided for that ruined race. The results of *our* action must be confined within narrower limits, but they may be unspeakably vast. Since then temptation has such power, and since also such results may flow from yielding to it, how fervently should we pray, "Lead us not into temptation"!

3. *Consider God's willingness to help us.* "If tempta-

tion has such power," men sometimes perversely reason, "how can we be expected to be always victorious over it? If the best of men have fallen, how can we stand?" This is false reasoning — itself a temptation of Satan to be resisted. We show you the thousands who have fallen, not to discourage you, but that in your danger you may see your need of an almighty Helper, and pray for his help. All who have fallen would have been saved from their falls, if they had trusted in God and sought his grace. But they did not see their danger, and had any one warned them, they would probably have replied, "You need not fear for us." When Jesus warned Peter, the self-confident disciple replied, "Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee." Had he realized his danger and asked God for help, that help would have been given. It is to be noted that none of those whose grievous falls are recorded in the Bible prayed for grace in the moments of temptation. Eve did not, Adam did not, David did not, Peter did not. That would have dissolved the spell, and brought Omnipotence to their aid. More are they that be for us than they that be against us. Let, then, every one daily pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" and when temptations meet him, let him lift his supplicating cry for help, and while doing this, let him summon his energies to the conflict, and all the combined forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil cannot harm him. A child, with God to help him, is stronger than all tempters and all temptations. Let us now inquire —

III. *What dispositions and purposes are implied in the right offering of this petition.*

1. *A holy dread of falling into sin.* The heart of the Christian shrinks from sin as his flesh from fire, and in proportion as he grows in likeness to God does this holy sensibility to the evils of sin increase. Yet he knows that so long as he is in this world he is in a sphere of danger. He dwells in the midst of contagion, the malaria of sin is in the moral atmosphere he breathes; and if God does not protect him he will take the disease that he loathes the most. Hence his earnest prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, or, if it must meet us, lead us safely through it."

2. We must offer this petition *with the determination as far as possible to avoid scenes of temptation.* The dread of sinning, of which I just spoke, involves this determination. Besides, prayer, if it does not impose, does recognize, an obligation to pursue the course which we pray God to help us follow. We may not pray to be kept in the way of life, and then recklessly tread the broad road to death. We may not pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and then rush into it, uncalled by Providence. Do not misunderstand me. There are temptations involved in our providential allotments which we may not try to escape. They lie right in the path of duty, and we cannot go round them without forsaking that path; and this we may not do for any reason whatever. *These* temptations we must meet manfully, with all our Christian armor on, not running from them, but overcoming them, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. But there are temptations to which we may not expose ourselves. The youth may not offer this petition, and then spend his time with wicked associates, or frequent the theatre or the bar-room. You may not offer this petition, and spend your time in reading books which tend to undermine the moral or religious principles, or to inflame the bad passions. In no case may you go, unbidden by God, into scenes of spiritual peril, whether to gratify your love of pleasure, or to increase your wealth, or to test your virtue. If you do, you tempt God, and forfeit the protection for which you pray when you say, "Lead us not into temptation."

3. We must offer this petition *with a determination to watch against temptation.* "*Watch and pray,*" says Jesus, "that ye enter not into temptation." Unite the two—not watch without praying, not pray without watching. Do both. The offering of this petition recognizes the obligation to watchfulness; and the holy dread of sinning that prompts the prayer is also a spirit of vigilance. An illustration will show this. Suppose a person escaped from cruel captivity, and passing through the country of the enemies from whom he is fleeing, and into whose hands he is fearful of falling. How watchful is he at every step, how carefully does he scan every object and every person he meets, and how cautiously

does he avoid every one who may turn out to be a foe! So with the Christian. He is escaping from the bondage of sin. He is passing through the country of his foes. He will not, indeed, as I said before, be able to avoid all temptations. They will meet him in the path where God leads him; but he need not fear them then, though an host should encamp against him; for if God is with him he is more than a match for every foe. The best security for this constant watchfulness is that sensibility to the evil of sin which is cultivated by habitual communion with God. This descries spiritual danger from afar, and avoids it. Like some insects, it puts forward its antennæ, to find, before it ventures, whether all is safe; and, if it perceives itself nearing the confines of sin, it retreats with haste, or instantly alters its course.

4. We must offer this petition *with the purpose to resist temptation at the first moment of attack*. If we do not wish to be led into temptation, we can have no desire to parley with it; and if we are ever successful in resisting temptation, it must be at this moment. If we once begin to dally with it, to inquire whether we may yield to it or not, to seek for palliating circumstances, to listen to the tempter's arguments, we weaken our own power of resistance and strengthen the position of our foe. Look at the temptation in Eden. Eve should not have listened for a moment to the tempter's voice; she should not have argued the question whether she should obey God or not; she should not have gazed at the tempting tree. So soon as she felt the first motion of desire for the forbidden fruit, she should have fled from the sight of the tree that was so temptingly pleasant to the eye. Had she done this, she would not have fallen; but she remained by the tree, continued to look, to listen, and to long; and so she fell. So has it often been with her descendants. If, at the first solicitation of temptation, they had fled from it as from death, or, supposing that impossible, if, instead of dallying with it, they had firmly resisted it, imploring God's help, they would have been saved. But they listened, and the longer they listened the more ready they were to yield; they gazed, and the longer they gazed the more irresolute they became. We have seen — perhaps our history furnishes il-

illustrations of the truth — that if we try to walk on that borderland between the clearly right and the clearly wrong, we are almost sure to find ourselves, ere long, completely within the domains of sin. Dare not, then, to dally with temptation — it is like playing with a poisonous serpent. A mother once told me a thrilling incident in her history. Her husband had built his house on the open prairie, and taken her and their only child, a boy three years old, there to live. One day the boy was missing. She searched and could not find him. The prairie-grass about their house was taller than the child, and hid him completely. She called but received no answer. After long searching, she came upon her little one, sitting on the ground, singing and playing, with one companion at his side. What was that companion? A large snake. You can imagine her feelings as she snatched her child and flew with him to the house, and her gladness, her gratitude, as she found he was unhurt. But her feelings as she discovered her little one playing with a serpent are but a faint image of what must be the feelings of God's blessed angels as they see men dallying with temptation; and mothers in heaven, if they know what is passing on earth, must often long to snatch their sons from the serpents that charm them, and with which they dare to play.

5. We should offer this petition *with earnest sympathy for our brethren who are also in peril*. The Saviour does not teach each of us to pray, "Lead *me* not into temptation," but each, as he enters his closet, to cry, "Lead *us* not into temptation." Each petitioner is thus taught to remember in his daily prayers his imperilled brethren. All are weak, tempted, liable to fall, and all need God's help; and each is taught to pray for all and all for each, that each and all may be carried safely through the perils of life. But if we must thus pray for others, much more must we be careful not ourselves to lead them into temptation. Some of those about us are feeble in purpose, and what we could do with safety may be ruinous to them. We must be careful to do nothing by which they are offended, or stumble, or are made weak. Our "rash word may touch what is in another a poised and trembling balance, and send the quivering purpose downward for-

ever." Let us beware lest, for our pleasure, or our gain, or by carelessness, we lead into temptation those whom we are bound, and whom our prayer pledges us, to guard, as far as we may, against temptation—that we break not, but strengthen, the bruised reed, that we quench not, but kindle to a flame, the smoking flax. In conclusion, we learn—

1. *One reason why God sometimes frustrates the plans of his children.* Often such schemes—apparently well-laid—are rendered vain by the movements of Providence, and God's disappointed people ask, "Why is it thus?" But this *may be* God's way of answering their daily petition, "Lead us not into temptation." If your schemes had been successful, you might have been puffed up with the pride that goeth before destruction, or been entangled beyond escape in the net of worldliness, or been led upon enchanted ground, where you would have slept the sleep of spiritual death. Satan would perhaps have asked no more to secure your destruction than the success of those schemes the upsetting of which so saddens you. You were, though you knew it not, asking for disappointment when you prayed, "Lead us not into temptation," and God in mercy answered your prayer. Complain not of the gracious answer; you may thank God for it forever.

2. *Parents must protect their children from temptations too strong for them.* They stand, in an important sense, in the place of God—God's vicegerents, in respect to their children; and as they desire their heavenly Father to guard them from overmastering temptation, so must they protect their offspring. We cannot, indeed, ward all temptation from our children, nor would it be desirable, if we could; for the person that had overcome *no* temptations in childhood and youth would be poorly equipped for the conflicts of life. But, to start with, temptation should be small—so small that, with parental help, the little one shall easily and thoroughly master it. A child should not be exposed to the influence of wicked companions, nor become familiar with profaneness, nor listen to impious and infidel sentiments. The parent should keep him, if needful by command and restraint, from the scenes where he will be exposed to temptations too strong for him. And when, later in life, you are seeking a situation for him,

do not place him where his temptations will be great, and where the man who teaches him the mysteries of trade will teach him also the mysteries of dishonesty, and perhaps some form of religious error. No amount of temporal advantage can compensate for the spiritual danger to which you thus expose your child; and well might he say to you, "Father, you early taught me to pray, 'Lead me not into temptation,' and now you, who are put over me in the place of God, are yourself exposing me to overwhelming temptation." What, then, shall we say of parents who themselves corrupt their children's morals, who make their homes homes of vice and crime, and by their example teach their children to drink, to curse and swear, to lie, to cheat, to break the Sabbath, to neglect the sanctuary, to cavil at piety, to live a godless life, and to trample the laws of God under foot? Yet there are such parents. Cruel men, if you have no regard for your own characters and your own souls, have some, at least, for those of your children.

Finally, *the young especially should offer the petition of the text.* They have strong susceptibilities to the seductions of worldly pleasure, are yet inexperienced in respect to the world's deceitfulness, and for them a thousand artful snares are laid. There are pleasures, misnamed innocent, which, while avoiding the grossness of dissipation, wear a seductive aspect to the young, and strongly tempt them from the ways of virtue. There are artful and fascinating companions who seek to lead the young astray. "There is the stage, with all its splendid apparatus for destroying souls. The most burning strains of eloquence and the most melting strains of music, the exquisite efforts of the pencil and the chisel, are all prostituted to make an appeal to the youthful heart in favor of irreligion and licentiousness. There are evil books, written with pens dipped in the poison of asps, for the very purpose of carrying to the youthful bosom the elements of pollution and death." At the head of this array of temptation is Satan, the grand master tempter, filled with malice, a veteran in the arts of seduction, and directing his assaults with consummate skill, so as to meet the peculiar susceptibilities of each soul. How, then, shall the youth be safe? He can be safe only under

the sheltering wing of the Almighty, only as he can truly say of the Lord, "*He* is my refuge and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust." Let, then, each youth commit the keeping of his soul to God in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator, and to Jesus Christ, as to a faithful Saviour, and watch and pray that he enter not into temptation, and he shall pass unhurt through the conflict, and come out of it triumphant; and by and by, when the battle of life is over, he shall know what this promise of Jesus means, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

X.

MATTHEW vi. 13.

"But deliver us from evil."

SOME commentators regard this and the preceding clause as together forming a single petition, the sixth and last of the prayer, which they paraphrase as follows: "Suffer us not to be led into temptation; but, should this befall us at any time, deliver us from the evil to which we shall thus be exposed." But I think our Lord's design is broader than this — that he teaches us in the text to pray for deliverance from *all evil*, and not from that only to which we are exposed in the hour of temptation. I regard the text, then, not as part of the sixth petition, but as itself a seventh petition, thus completing the sacred number. We shall see that, thus viewed, it is not less comprehensive than the petitions that precede it.

Many have regarded this petition simply as a prayer against the power and malignity of Satan, as if he were the source of all danger and of all evil. Hence they translate, "Deliver us from the evil one." It is true that in some other passages of the New Testament the original phrase may have this meaning; but here, I think, it must have a much broader signification. This interpretation narrows too much the meaning of this concluding petition, and takes it out of harmony with the rest of the prayer. The evil here includes *all the evil under which man groans, or to which he may be exposed*. This evil is of two kinds, distinct in their nature, but closely connected in fact and in the workings of God's government, connected as tree and fruit, as fountain and stream, as cause and effect. One kind is sin, the other is suffering; the one is evil done, the other is evil endured; one is the depraved in character, the

other the misery flowing therefrom. From both these we pray our Father in heaven to deliver us.

1. *From the evil of sin.* This is the parent evil, and the evil which every holy mind most dreads and hates. Satan himself cannot harm us unless he can induce us to sin. If he fails in this, he may, instead of injuring us, be the occasion of our receiving everlasting benefit; and thus even he, with all his malignity, may be made to work together with all things else, with the dealings of God's providence and the operations of his grace, for our good. Temptation is not evil to us if it does not overcome us, if we overcome it; but is, on the contrary, good in its results, invigorating our virtue and raising us nearer to God. Sin, then, is the great evil, without which everything that may betide us is turned into a blessing. And such are the tendencies within us and the temptations without us that we are in constant danger of sinning, unless we are watched by a more vigilant eye and protected by a stronger arm than our own.

This petition, then, is a prayer that we may not fall into sin; but it is also a prayer for *sanctification*. What, when viewed on the divine side and as related to God's energy, is called regeneration, the new birth, the new creation, the quickening of the dead in sin; and, when viewed on the human side, is called conversion, repentance, turning from sin to God,—is but the beginning of that process of sanctification which will go on until the regenerated man stands perfect and complete in all the will of God. It is, indeed, the most striking and important step in the process, because it is the turning-point of character. It is the beginning of a new and spiritual and heavenly life — *new*, but not as yet perfect; *spiritual*, but marred as yet by the remains of old carnal tendencies which are held in check, but not destroyed; *heavenly*, but introduced among earth-born propensities and habits which it must conquer, bringing every thought, every affection, and every emotion into obedience to Christ. Its characteristic throughout, its definition from first to last, is *the production of holiness by divine grace in a human soul*. At first it is the beginning of holiness, brought into being by the Spirit of God; afterwards it is the addition, by the same Spirit, of one degree of holiness to another,

and the removal from the heart of whatever is opposed to holiness.

Regeneration, then, begins, but only *begins*, man's deliverance from the evil of sin. At that moment, by that act, we are freed from the reigning power of sin. It ceases to have dominion over us. The controlling purposes, the supreme affections, are changed, and the man is a new man, but not a perfect man. He has changed his course, but he has still the long road to travel. He has passed the crisis of his disease and is convalescent, but he is not well yet; there is still disease in his system. The mass of hereditary corruption is not all removed, with its brood of passions and of impure desires. "Evil is present with him." He has crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts, but, though nailed to the cross, it is not dead yet; it dies a lingering death, and often struggles hard to regain its wasting life and its old dominion.

This petition, then, in the light in which we are now viewing it, is an appropriate one for every human being. No man becomes so holy in this life that he does not need to offer it. Many Christians, indeed, arrive at a state in which they have no doubt of their fellowship with God; in which they serve God with filial devotion; in which they maintain a conscience void of offence both towards God and man; in which they would prefer death in any frightful form to the commission of one known, deliberate sin; and in which the peace of God ever rules in their hearts. Their *experience* teaches them that "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." I believe it to be both the duty and the privilege of all Christians to reach this state; and then, still looking upward towards the spotless holiness of God, to say as Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but, forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth unto the things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Deliver me, Father in heaven, from the evil of sin." The best of men the record of whose hidden life has been given to us, men who have attained this state of full assurance, in which they served God not at all in the spirit of bondage but with the cheerful spirit of sons, men who have

reached and passed the line which many would call perfection, yet did not dream that they were wholly delivered from the evil and the corruption of sin; they still mourned over their remaining imperfections; they still saw impure motives mingling with the pure, and tainting their best services; they were still painfully conscious of falling below the standard which God had set for them, and below their own ideal; they still hungered and thirsted after righteousness; and still prayed, "Deliver us from evil — the evil of sin."

This, then, is a petition for every human being. The sinner yet unrenewed needs to offer it, for he is still a slave to sin which will hold him forever in bondage unless God shall rescue him; the Christian whose attainments are small has need to offer it, for the sin which still cleaves to him mars the beauty of his character, lessens his usefulness, and impairs his peace; and the Christian who has reached the highest degree of holiness ever yet attained in this life has need to offer it, for even he is not yet holy as God is holy, not yet love as God is love.

2. We pray in this petition *to be delivered from suffering, the child of sin*. This we all have felt to be a real evil. Some have even taught that it is the *only real* evil, that sin itself is evil only because it destroys happiness and produces suffering. Their doctrine is that the only ultimate good is happiness, and the only ultimate evil is misery. My conscience, my reason, my whole moral nature, revolts from this doctrine. I believe holiness to be good in itself, the highest good, and sin to be evil in itself, the worst evil in the universe, the worst conceivable evil. But suffering, though not the only ultimate evil, and not the worst evil, is a real evil. The suffering consequent upon sin is felt partly in this life, and partly in the life to come. All the suffering which we feel or see is, directly or indirectly, the result of sin. Who does not wish to be freed from suffering? The world, through all its history, has been trying to throw off this oppressive load. The whole creation has groaned and travailed in pain together until now. Men struggle blindly in this matter; but still they struggle. They do what is fitted to perpetuate their misery, while they are vainly endeavoring to free themselves from it.

They love sin and hate suffering. Feeling a torturing fire in their bosom, they try to put it out by pouring oil upon it. But all feel the load of misery, and long to be delivered from it, while few repair to the throne of grace, crying, "Deliver us from evil, the evil of sin," realizing that it is from this, from its curse and its power, we must first be delivered. But this is what the Christian most deeply realizes. It does not indeed comport with the wisdom of God to free us from *all* suffering in this life. It would hardly be right to pray that we may never suffer again. Even his most favored children suffer, and are made perfect through suffering. God is wise and kind in permitting them to suffer thus, in making the fruit of sin aid in working out the cure of sin. All the suffering needful for *this purpose* the Christian is willing to endure, for he knows that the object to be gained infinitely outweighs the suffering. He feels, through all his soul he feels, that it is better to suffer than to sin. But the Christian does wish to be delivered from all the tormenting consequences of sin not needful for this gracious purpose. He would not suffer one pang more than will conduce to the good of his own soul, and the souls of others.

But the chief results of sin flow on to the future world. Here men, though sinners, are living under a gracious economy. This is an anomalous world, a world of probation for sinful beings. Retribution comes not here, but hereafter. I will not attempt to describe the suffering that awaits the impenitent when the judgment that now lingers shall overtake the soul, and the damnation that now slumbers shall wake to its solemn work, and the text which tells us, "The wages of sin is death," shall receive its fearful elucidation. Who does not desire deliverance from evils requiring to be pictured in images so terrible and vivid as those which Jesus and the inspired writers have chosen for this purpose? And who but God can grant deliverance from these evils, the natural and the legal, and, whether natural or legal, the *just* results of sin? But if you will not ask, how can you hope for this deliverance? He offers it only on condition that you ask for it, desiring to be delivered both from sin and from hell. He does not promise deliverance from damnation to those who,

however they may hate damnation in itself, still "love it in its causes well." Why not, then, cry, "God be merciful to us sinners! Deliver us from both sin and hell"? Do you say you do not believe any such evil in another world is to flow from sin in this world? But the Bible certainly *seems* to threaten such evil. This revelation is so constructed as to leave the impression that for the wicked the miseries of time are but the prelude of the deeper miseries of eternity. Almost all who have read it and studied it have so understood it. If this book has any value as a revelation from God, the sins of this world, if not forsaken and forgiven, will be followed by a fearful retribution in the world to come. Why then, I ask again, do you not pray for deliverance from this fearful evil? Do you say that you wish to live in sin to gain the rewards of selfishness, the pleasures or the profits of a godless life for the present, hoping that, before you die, you will secure deliverance? Ah! then, while recoiling from hell, you still cling to that which kindles its fires. You wish to sin, but not to suffer the just consequences of your sins; but you will recklessly, madly, risk those consequences for the sake of the pleasure or the profit you look for in an ungodly life.

If now any of you are ready to offer this petition, see that you do it —

1. *Repenting of sin.* To ask God to save us from the consequences of the sins to which we still cling is to ask him to dissolve the connection fixed by his wisdom and righteousness and love between sin and suffering. This he will never do. If a man will not repent, if by impenitence he makes the sins of the past the sins also of the present, he must abide the consequences; and no prayers of his can avert them. No prayers of his can induce God to sever a connection established by the concurrent dictates of wisdom and righteousness and love — a connection rendered necessary and inevitable by the very nature of things. Remember, God never does or can forgive sin, till it is repented of. Remember, too, that nothing can arrest the natural results of sin in the misery of the sinner, until it is repented of. See that you offer this petition —

2. *With heartfelt desires to be freed from evil, and from evil of both kinds.* This is only saying that the prayer must

be, not hypocritical, but sincere ; in other words, that it must be *genuine prayer*, and not pretence, not mockery. I should not think it needful to state this truism so distinctly, but for the sake of giving you a test of sincerity. If your prayer is sincere, you will not only offer the prayer, but also use all the means of deliverance which God has placed within your reach, and you will especially strive to free yourselves from the parent evil of sin. No doubt some of you would avoid suffering and perdition, if you could, without avoiding the self-indulgence, the self-seeking, and the self-worship which make perdition. Satan would. Every lost spirit in the universe would. But offering the petition in the text pledges one to use every effort to free himself from sin, the *cause* of perdition. That is the main thing. He will watch against sin. He will fight against sin. He will resolutely deny himself every sinful indulgence. He will set the Lord always before him. He will keep his mind in contact with religious truths of the highest order. He will frequent the sanctuary and the prayer-meeting. See that you offer this petition —

3. *With faith in Jesus.* The way of resolution, of amendment, of struggle without faith, will not lead to deliverance from either the curse or the power of sin ; but the way of faith leads directly to deliverance from both ; for it ensures forgiveness, and brings us into harmony with God's plans, and ensures for us his grace in the conflict. He *justifies* us by his grace *through faith* ; he *purifies our hearts by faith*. Rejecting Christ, we reject God's way of deliverance ; and surely we cannot so be delivered. To Christ, then, we must all come, or evil will pursue us forever. See that you offer this petition —

4. *With brotherly compassion.* It is not you alone that are involved in this evil, and exposed to an endless accumulation of its woes. The world is groaning under it, and, consciously or unconsciously, intelligently or blindly, millions of sufferers are to-day moaning and sighing for deliverance from evil. The sigh comes from the palaces of the rich and the hovels of the poor, from the chambers of sickness and from the halls of pleasure. It is the moan of humanity, the low, long groan which has come down from generation to generation, the he-

editary wail of a race in ruin, blindly, vaguely struggling to regain, if it may, the Paradise it has lost. When we pray for our own deliverance, we must remember these our fellow-sufferers also. Nor is prayer enough. We must prove the sincerity of our prayers by trying to remove the evils that curse our brethren. We must become co-workers with God in delivering this groaning family. And, remembering that the parent evil is sin, and that the gospel is the divinely chosen remedy for this evil, we must, so far as we may, apply this remedy to the evils of the world. Plans for the removal of evil that ignore the gospel, its effects in elevating the moral sense and the moral principles of society, and in regenerating individual hearts, can never reduce the sum of human evil. Material progress, railways, telegraphs, civilization, science, literature, education, without the gospel, cannot do this work. These things may somewhat vary the forms and aspects of human evil, but do not lessen it. Christ is the world's great deliverer, and to him we must come ourselves, to him we must direct our fellow-men; to him the world must come before that painful cry shall give place to songs of deliverance.

We have *great encouragements thus to offer this petition*. Let us look at them.

1. The fact that this petition is contained in this prayer is a rich encouragement. Jesus, we may be sure, would not teach us to pray for what God would not be willing to give. We know that if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us; and we know also that it is according to his will to give us the things which our Lord has taught us to ask for. The Lord's Prayer may be regarded as a cluster of promises, exceeding great and precious, in which are specified the good things which it is the will of our heavenly Father to give to them that ask him. Whatever doubt we might have in regard to his willingness to give us other things that we might wish to ask for, we can have no doubt as to his willingness to grant us these things.

2. We are encouraged to offer this prayer by the fact that *the heart of God is itself in our favor*. We must carry on the thought of the fatherhood of God expressed in the first words of the prayer through all its petitions." OUR FATHER —

deliver us, thy children, from evil." Will not our Father be ready to do that, if we are willing that he should? Will not all his paternal nature prompt him to just this work which we ask him to do? Think, too, how he feels, not only towards us as his children, but towards the evil from which we ask him to deliver us. He not only loves us, but his whole heart is set against evil. Is the evil sin? If we have learned so to hate this as to cry to him to deliver us from it, we have learned at length to feel towards it as he has felt ever since it had a being, and as he has long been trying to teach us to feel. Even now, we do not hate sin as he does. His desires for our sanctification are far more intense than ours. Ours are due to his grace, and are but a faint echo of his. Will he not, then, aid us in doing this which he so wishes to have done? Surely there is no prayer that we may offer with firmer assurance of success than this for deliverance from sin. Do we wish for sanctification? This, too, is the *will of God*. Do we hate sin? He hates it more intensely. Do we feel our need of his aid in this work? He has made provision for this. He will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. You have an easily besetting sin which you wish to overcome—a sin which has gained the mastery of you—against which you have struggled in vain. Look, brother, to our Father for help. His heart is with you in your struggle. His grace is ready for you, and sufficient. Be encouraged. You shall conquer.

In this petition you pray to be delivered *from suffering—the fruit of sin*. Now God has no pleasure in the sinner's death. As a moral Governor, as a just God, with the welfare of a moral universe to protect, he has linked to sin the misery which is its fitting penalty. But if the designs of justice can otherwise be answered, we may be sure that he will not be unwilling to dis sever from sin its results of misery, its just penalty, in the case of every repenting sinner. In other words, if this condition can be met, if pardon can be rendered safe for the sinner and for the moral universe, God is ready to forgive. He would not wish to behold a sinner suffering even the just penalty of his sin, if the high and sacred ends of justice can be otherwise secured. But he has taken

care to secure these ends by the work of his Son, so that he can be just while justifying every one that believeth in Jesus. He has no delight in our suffering, even when we deserve it, even when we have brought the suffering on ourselves. He would rather justify the sinner than justly condemn him. He would rather make us blessed than inflict on us the deserved curse. He would rather deliver us from evil than see us forever enduring its scourgings. His heart is with us when we penitently offer this prayer.

Finally, the encouragement becomes complete when we look at *what God has already done for our deliverance*. That story of the life and death of the Son of God — how it encourages us in every moment of our doubt! The love of God to this world, the unsearchable riches of Christ — how inexhaustible the theme! All this, which so wakes our wonder, was done to open the way for our deliverance from evil. But no prayer save the sad wail of our misery had gone up to heaven asking for deliverance. SELF-MOVED, God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. SELF-MOVED, he sent his Spirit to do his work of renewing and sanctifying grace. Will he not, then, hear our prayer when we ask, as he has himself taught us, for the deliverance which he has provided at such a cost?

Who of us, then, will not now offer this prayer — offer it with all that penitential sorrow for sin, with all that faith in Jesus, with all those purposes of amendment, which such a petition calls for? “Our Father in heaven, deliver us from evil.” Offer the petition here and now. SIN and MISERY — all evil, real and conceivable, is summed up in these *two words*. Nothing bad can come within the compass of thought which these two words do not express. Think how this evil will accumulate in eternity if you are not delivered from it — sin ever increasing its weight and its power, and sending its thrills and pangs of anguish through every quivering nerve of the spiritual system. THIS IS HELL. Its elements are already at work in the sinner’s soul, its fires are already kindling within him, and unless he is delivered from them they will burn more fiercely forever. THIS IS HELL — sin and its natural and legal consequences. Oh, fly from it!

Leave your sins, and fly from it ! Pray, “ Deliver us from evil — this hell within us, this hell before us.” Cry to the everlasting Father, the gracious Saviour, the sanctifying Spirit, or else evil will rob you of heaven, of peace, of hope, of all the good for which your souls were made. But if your prayer is rightly offered, how gloriously will it be answered — the bands of evil bursting at the moment of your offering it, falling off one by one, until *all evil* — the evil of sin, the evil of suffering — shall be forever left behind, and “ God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”

XI.

MATTHEW vi. 13.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

IT is only fair to say that it is very doubtful whether these words were a part of the Lord's prayer as given by the Saviour, or whether they were added by some later hand. The authority of the older and better manuscripts now accessible is against their genuineness. On the other hand, they form so fitting a close to the prayer, they agree so thoroughly with the spirit of the prayer, and of the whole Scripture, that we feel almost disposed to adopt the language of Stier: "If there is anywhere an internal criticism which may maintain its prerogative over the external testimonies of the manuscripts which we have directly received, and historical monuments, it is in this place. . . . For ourselves, we rest calmly in hope that one day, when all that is lost is found again, and the patchwork of history is a completed whole, it will be made clear how it has come to pass that this doxology early fell away, and was omitted from the manuscripts and the fathers. . . . Such a conclusion comes naturally to the praying heart; the Church has ever possessed it, and will never more let it go; this is to us an irrefragable argument that the Lord has given it to every heart and to the whole Church." But it happens in this as in other cases where doubt exists as to the true reading of a Scripture clause that, if the doubtful clause is retained, it will lead no one astray, for it agrees with other indisputable portions of the sacred volume; and if it is omitted, nothing essential to the integrity of truth is lost, for other passages teach us precisely the same thing. The text so fully accords with the tenor of Scripture that we cannot go astray in closing our

prayers after this manner, even if it were not, as I think it was, originally uttered by the Saviour. Regarding, then, the text as entirely scriptural in its spirit and its teachings, let us consider it—

I. *As a humble plea with God.*

II. *As an ascription of grateful praise to God.*

1. We consider these words *as a humble plea with God.*

“It is,” says John Foster, “a certain fact that, whenever a man prays aright, he forgets the philosophy of prayer, and feels as if his supplications really would make a difference in the determination and conduct of the Deity.” Perhaps this *is the true philosophy of prayer* — that it *does* make a difference in the conduct of the Deity, that he acts differently from what he would if the prayer were not offered. I will add that in proportion as a man grows earnest in prayer he not only asks but pleads with God for blessings; in other words, he presents *pleas or reasons* why the blessings he asks for should be given. This is one striking characteristic of the most prevailing prayers recorded in the Bible. Look, for instance, at the prayer of Moses for Israel, when God threatened to destroy them for making and worshipping the golden calf under Horeb. “Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians say: ‘For mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst to them, ‘I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed.’” Here is more than mere asking: here is humble and earnest pleading, urging various and powerful arguments. This is but one instance and illustration, among many which I might cite, of that pleading with God which was so common among the saints whose story is recorded in the Bible.

If any should object that there can be no use in presenting reasons to God, since he must be fully acquainted with all these reasons without our naming them, I reply that this is

equally an objection against all prayer, since God must know, as Jesus reminds us, what things we have need of before we ask him; but the great Teacher does not intimate that this is a reason why we should not pray, but only why in praying we should not use vain repetitions like the heathen; and in the same connection he bids us enter our closets and pray. God, for reasons that *seemed good to him*, and therefore must *be* good, has seen fit to establish a connection between our asking and his bestowing, and a still more intimate connection between our earnest pleading and his bestowing. If you ask me why he has established this connection, I might reply, "So it seemed good in his sight," and there rest the matter. If you still press the question, I proceed to say that the pleading of good men may itself be a good reason why God should give them what they ask for. The earnestness of a child in asking is sometimes a good reason why a wise parent should gratify his desires, even though the parent should know as much about the child's wants before as after the asking. The asking and the earnestness must be taken into account by the parent when deciding whether it is wise to grant the favor to the child. It is not always the same thing to give to a child that asks earnestly that it would be to give to one that does not ask at all, or asks but feebly. So between God and his children, their asking is a reason why he should give. Prayer, as even we are able to see, is useful, because it links us to the throne and heart of God; because it impresses us with our manifold necessities; because, as the fitting expression of dependence, it deepens in us the sense of dependence; and because it thus fits us for humbly and gratefully receiving the blessings which God confers. But the more earnest our prayers, the more fully will these gracious ends of prayer be answered. It is when we become so earnest that the heart fills the mouth with pleading arguments in prayer that we are best fitted, and therefore most likely, to obtain favors from our heavenly Father.

The text, as I have said, may be regarded as a humble plea with God, suggesting reasons why he should grant the favors we have been asking — "Give us these things, *for* thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." This is a

strong plea, giving the sum and substance of the arguments (except one that in its fulness and richness was of later revelation) which we may urge in prayer; just as the preceding petitions give us the sum and substance of the requests we may offer in prayer. You notice that it finds the ground of our hope of success, not in our merit, but in God's attributes and glory. Thus God should be first and last in our prayers, as well as in our hearts. We begin by praying that his name may be hallowed; we end by referring to his glory as the reason why our prayer should be answered. You must have noticed that the ancient saints were wont to urge their requests by a similar plea. Listen, for instance, to Daniel's prayer: "Now, therefore, O my God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and cause thy face to shine upon thy desolated sanctuary, *for the Lord's sake*. O my God, incline thine ear and hear; open thine eyes and behold our desolations and the city *that is called by thy name*; for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, *but for thy great mercies*. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, *for thy name's sake, for thy city and thy people are called by thy name*." Here, every plea is drawn from the heart and the honor of God. And how often did ancient saints and prophets plead thus: "for thine own glory, for thine own name's sake, according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies." In truth, it is there alone that we can rest our hope; for if God does not find in himself, in his own glory, and in his own heart of infinite love the reasons for blessing us, we must go unblest. For, as Leighton says, "There is nothing in ourselves to move God by but abundance of misery, and that moves not but by reason of his bounty; so still the cause of his hearing and the argument of our entreating are in himself alone. Were it not thus, how could we hope to prevail with him? Yea, how durst we offer to come unto him? It is well for us that there is enough in him to encourage us to come, and to furnish us with arguments to persuade him by, so that we shall not come in vain."

But how does the text become a plea to enforce the preceding petitions? Let us apply it to the first three — those which

pertain to the honor of God. "Thine is the kingdom," the *universal* kingdom; the universe is thy magazine of resources; thou hast the rightful control over all those things, those laws, those forces, those lines of mighty influence, those agents, good and evil, that may be employed to hasten the coming of that blessed period when thy name shall be universally hallowed, thy authority universally established, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. "Thine is the power;" not the resources of the universe only, but the reserved force of omnipotence behind them; exert then that power to effect these purposes of beneficence and grace. "Thine is the glory;" the honors which come from thee shall return to thee, and when these petitions shall be granted, praises shall ascend to thee from millions on millions of adoring and grateful and joyful hearts. Exert then thine own power, employ thine own resources, to extend thine own kingdom and to promote thine own glory.

Let us apply this plea to the last four petitions — those which have special reference to our wants. "Thine is the kingdom;" and from the boundless resources of thy universe, thy children beseech thee to supply their daily wants. Thou art our King, and therefore thou, and thou only, hast the right to forgive our sins, and to protect us from our spiritual foes. "Thine is the power;" thou canst therefore supply all our wants, save us in all temptations, and deliver us from all evil. "Thine is the glory;" all the good thou doest us will bring honor and praise to thee forever, not from us only, but from all the holy who, in the ages to come, in the long forever, shall hear of it. Thou canst have no higher glory than that of blessing, and forgiving, and protecting, and saving thy sinning children — the glory which shall shine from thy redeemed and sanctified ones. I intimated that there was one plea which the text does not express nor by itself suggest. It is the plea of which the Saviour spoke, on the night before his death, when he taught his disciples that they should receive whatever they should ask "*in his name*," and which the Church of God has recognized for eighteen centuries by closing her prayers with the phrase "for Christ's sake," or some equivalent phrase. The time had not yet come, when the Saviour taught his disciples what

we call "The Lord's Prayer," to teach them to ask in his name. His sacrifice was not yet offered, his atoning work was not yet done, and he must wait till the very eve of his finishing the work which the Father gave him to do, before he spoke of this most prevailing plea. We can use it, as the saints of former times could not. Let us rejoice in it, and plead it before God. Let us remember too that it has not rendered obsolete the pleas of the older saints. On the contrary, it adds new force to them. It makes God's kingdom, and his power and glory, seem more wonderful: a kingdom founded in his own self-sacrificing love; the power, the moral force of the incarnation, and the cross, and the spirit of grace; the glory, of mercy in its efforts to save the lost.

2. Having considered the text as a humble plea with God, we turn to contemplate it as *an ascription of grateful praise to God*. "In everything," says Paul, "by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God." "Pray without ceasing, *in everything give thanks*, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Whatever may be our wants or our burdens, we have always something to be thankful for — *this*, if nothing else, that we may come boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need; *this*, that we may cast our burden on the Lord, and that he will sustain us; *this*, too, that God himself is light, and that he is love. Thus, whatever our situation, there is always that in God that calls for praise. Whatever else may change, he remains the same. Whatever clouds and darkness may be round about him, he is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. Amid all the fluctuations of the world, there is always reason to rejoice in the thought that the kingdom and the power and the glory are forever his, and to sing with gladness, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" From the depth of our own misery we may look up to him who is over all, God blessed forever.

Ascriptions of praise like the text are frequent in the Bible. Many of the psalms that begin with complaint, or supplication, or confession end with thanksgiving. The mournful feelings of the Psalmist become, as he progresses in prayer,

merged in his holy joy, that rises and deepens till his heart becomes so full that his feelings must find utterance, and he both blesses God himself, and calls on others to join him in blessing God for his glorious character and his glorious works. The book of Psalms ends in nothing but praise. Men sometimes seem to feel that prayer is the appropriate business of earth, as praise will be the appropriate business of heaven. But even David, dwelling in the comparative darkness of the Jewish economy, has taught us that "praise is comely for the upright," and has shown us by his example how much of the spirit of heavenly praise may be felt by the saints on earth. Now it would be strange indeed, if, amid the twilight of those ancient times, there was real cause for more frequent and more rejoicing psalms than under the clear sunlight of this dispensation of the Spirit. The highest claims upon our praise come from the cross, which had not yet borne its illustrious Victim, and could be but faintly seen over the lapse of coming ages, even by the prophetic eye of David; while we live in the full beams of its glories, and of the truths that are ranged about it in concentric circles of light and beauty. We ought to be, if we are not, nearer heaven in spirit than those holy men of old, who, not having received the promises, but only seen them afar off, yet embraced them, and praised God in strains that often seem too high for us.

We certainly do not find less of this spirit of grateful praise in the New Testament than in the Old. The apostles give us fuller developments of Christian doctrine than the Old Testament prophets were inspired to give; but they frequently interrupt the thread of their argument to give expression to their feelings of adoration and gratitude; as in this doxology, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory and dominion forever." Paul closes the sublime argument in the Epistle to the Romans, in which he had developed the whole system of Christian doctrine, with the exclamation, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! . . . For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever." He closes a prayer for the Ephesian Christians with the words: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all

that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

We see then, that, if we regard the text as an ascription of praise to God, it is precisely in the spirit of inspired and holy men of both dispensations. It is also in the very spirit of heaven. "I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood round about the throne and worshipped God, saying, 'Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever.'" Many such passages there are in the book of Revelation. Now no words of this prayer which the Master taught us should be lightly uttered; but surely these concluding words, so like the worship of heaven, ought not to be spoken without the deepest emotions. Few thoughts are more fitted to thrill the soul with holy delight than this that *God reigns*, that the kingdom is his and not man's, that the ultimate sovereignty is not in the hands of earthly potentates, not even in the hands of the people, but in the hands of him whose wisdom, love, and power are perfect, and who, raised above the influences of human passion and selfishness, is unchangeable in his goodness and his righteousness. How should we rejoice, too, in the thought that his is the *power* to control the kingdom over which he reigns, and to carry out the plans which his wisdom and his love have formed. "ALLELUIA, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" What joy, too, in the thought that he sends forth the radiance of his *glory* like unfading sunshine over his universe, and receives in return glory for himself from all which he has created. It completes the joy to know that these glories of our Father *shall last forever*. All glories but his and those that are the reflection of his shall fade; but his, the brightest and the best of all, shall brighten forever and ever. How fitting that we express before God the feelings which such thoughts are fitted to excite! God loves to hear the praises of his children, for he perceives in them the expressions of our virtue, and knows that such expressions

tend to increase our holiness and our joy. What a holy and blessed world were this, if, entering into the full spirit of the text, earth with all her voices were praising God! We close this and all our prayers with the word "Amen." This is a Hebrew word meaning true, faithful, sure. It expresses our heart's assent to our confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings. It is as if the whole prayer were condensed and repeated in this closing word. It expresses, too, our confidence in the faithfulness of God, our assurance that we shall be heard. It means, at the conclusion of our prayers, both "So let it be" and "So will it be."

In concluding this series of discourses on the prayer taught us by our Lord, I will offer a few remarks.

1. *How comprehensive is this prayer.* It is so brief that it might be written on the palm of an infant's hand; that a child's memory can easily retain it; that it can be deliberately repeated in half a minute; yet what is defective in it? In that brief space our desires for the honor of God, for the progress of his kingdom, for the conversion and sanctification of our friends and of all mankind, for the supply of our temporal wants, for protection against our spiritual foes, for deliverance from all evil, have all been offered; and we have enforced these varied and far-reaching requests with an appropriate plea, and have expressed to God our gratitude and joy that his kingdom, and power, and glory are eternal. What is there coming within the proper scope of prayer that is not included here!

But the Saviour did not mean to confine us to these comprehensive expressions. There are times when it is well for us to expand the requests which he has thus condensed. It will increase our interest and our earnestness to descend to particulars. Thus in praying, "Thy kingdom come," we pray, of course, that each one of our friends and neighbors may be a subject of God's kingdom of grace, that every tribe and nation may be converted to Christ; but it may be wise for us to consider the wants of some one of them, and plead with God for that one. When we pray, "Forgive us our debts," it is well for us to consider what these debts are, and confess them as our memory recalls them, one by one. So with all

these petitions. Jesus did not mean to confine us to these words. *He* spent whole nights in prayer, showing that a soul that feels its wants and the worth of communion with God will not be restricted to any form. If the heart can breathe into this or any other form the spirit of prayer, it is well — let the form be used; but surely the heart of piety will want sometimes to go beyond the limits of any form, and express its desires to God in words of its own choosing. While, therefore, we see in the comprehensiveness of this prayer the wisdom of Jesus, we are sure the man would act very unwisely who should confine himself to this or any other form. Let the heart have free scope, and while keeping within the limits marked out by Jesus, let it speak in detail its own deep feelings, praying that this friend and that may be conformed to God's will, that this sin and that may be forgiven, that we may be kept from this and that temptation most dangerous to us, and delivered from this and that specific evil with which we are burdened or to which we are exposed.

2. *This prayer furnishes tests for self-examination.* Can we not only say, but *pray*, "The Lord's Prayer"? To some this may seem no test at all. This prayer — it is a very easy thing to *say* it. You have said it ten thousand times. Yes, *said* it, and perhaps mocked God in saying it. A parrot might be taught to say it, and with as much of prayer as there is in the repetition of it by many children and many men. It only requires a large degree of moral insensibility to repeat this prayer without realizing any of its intense meaning. But suppose that some day, while thus repeating it, its solemn import should suddenly blaze out upon your conscience, and that for once your tongue should be so tied to your heart that you could not utter a word which the heart did not mean: could you then say this prayer? Suppose the test of your sincerity were your *actions*, could you then say these familiar words? You call God your Father: then you are cherishing the obedient, loving, trustful spirit of a child of God. You pray that his name may be hallowed: then you serve him with reverence and godly fear. You pray for the coming of his kingdom: then you submit to him, and labor and give to extend that kingdom among men. You pray that his will may

be done on earth as it is in heaven : then you cheerfully do and suffer all his will. You pray for your daily bread : then you feel your dependence on him for it, and are contented and grateful when he supplies you with barely the comforts of life. You pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors : " then you are penitent for your sins and mean to forsake them, and are cherishing in your own heart the forgiving spirit of he gospel towards all who have wronged you. You pray, "Lead us not into temptation : " then you watch against temptation, avoid it so far as you can, and resist it at the first moment of attack. You pray, "Deliver us from evil : " then you hate sin, shun it, try to free yourself from it, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Can you stand the test?

3. *The prayerful should become more prayerful.* Look over this prayer, and see how many and what good things can be obtained by asking for them. In praying after this manner, you ask for the very things for which Jesus taught us to ask and which God desires to give. Pray then for them, expecting great blessings in answer to your prayers. Pray more and better and you shall receive more and do more good. For yourselves and for others, try "the last possible efficacy of earnest and persevering prayer," and see what the result will be.

4. *Mingle thanksgiving with all your prayers.* Some of you are not happy Christians. You wonder that you are not happier. One reason may be that you are not more thankful. You pray and pray, but you do not praise. You confess your sins, but you do not thank God. You are familiar with the penitential psalms, but with the hallelujah psalms you have less acquaintance. Your Bible opens more readily at the fifty-first psalm than at the one hundred and third. You have blistered the page which records the former more often with your tears of penitence than the page which records the latter with your tears of gratitude. This ought not so to be. If you want to be joyful you must praise God more. You will never have the foretaste of heaven's joys until you catch its spirit of thanksgiving.

Finally, the prayerless must begin to pray. Some of you do not pray. It is strange, passing strange. How shall we

account for the amazing fact? Is it that you do not know how to pray? But Jesus has taught you, has chosen the very words which, *if the heart means them*, become acceptable prayer. Is it that you think it does no good to pray? Are then the promises of God to go for nothing? When he affirms the connection between asking and receiving, will you deny it? Do you say then that you have no heart to pray? I am afraid this is true. But *what* a truth! You ought to have a heart to pray. You ought, in all humility and penitence, to ask God for such a heart. You ought, relying on his grace, imploring his aid, to pray till you do have a heart to pray. You ought to begin now.

XII.

SELF-SACRIFICE FOR CHRIST.

I CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.

"Seeketh not her own."

THIS chapter has been called "one of the gems of the sacred volume." It is indeed a gem, a diamond of the first water, and flashes with celestial brightness. But it is a diamond which cuts as well as shines, and cuts at every angle, and cuts deep into the hardest heart. If, as is sometimes said, there is no chapter in the Bible that is more beautiful than this, it is also true that there is none that is more searching, and none that makes greater havoc with all false pretences to goodness. Its first words are both striking and startling: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." It is not needful to say here that the word "charity," in its present meaning, is far from being the equivalent of the Greek term which Paul uses throughout this chapter. Nor is any other word in our language the exact equivalent of that. The word "*love*" has lower and more earthly associations; but in its higher uses, as when we say, "The fruit of the Spirit is love," "God is love," it expresses well the apostle's meaning. The apostle proceeds, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I had all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Eloquence of the highest kind, such as men call angelic or god-

like, is but discordant, stunning noise, like that of a Chinese gong, if it is not animated by love. I may have all gifts, all knowledge, all faith so as to remove mountains, and if I have not *love, I am nothing*, absolutely without worth in God's sight. What does he care for my gifts, if I am destitute of the love which would assimilate my character to his? Nay, I may distribute in morsels my goods to feed the poor, I may embrace the stake as a martyr, and all my liberality, though it may help the poor whom I feed, all my suffering, shall profit me nothing, unless it is love that prompts me. God has no reward for deeds of which love is not the motive.

The apostle next gives us some of the features of this love. "Love suffereth long and is kind, love envieth not, love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." How beautiful this portrait! We would like to examine the whole picture, feature by feature. But this is not my purpose now. I wish, for your good and mine, to fix attention for a time on that trait of love which is pictured in the phrase, "Love seeketh not her own."

What does the apostle mean by this? Plainly, he does *not* mean that when a man is swayed by Christian love he does not in any manner or degree seek his own good. There is a self-love which belongs to the nature of moral beings, and cannot be destroyed without annihilating the soul. This must be carefully distinguished from the selfishness which God forbids. It is simply the desire of one's own good in the broadest and deepest sense of that phrase, including all sorts of good, bodily, mental, spiritual, including also, of course, the dread of suffering, of evil in all its forms, and the tendency to shrink from it. It is not *selfishness*, the selfishness that is the opposite of Christian love and therefore sinful, when a drowning man struggles to reach a boat or the shore, or when a man, awakened at midnight by the flames that light up his chamber, rushes to escape them. The man Christ Jesus, who was himself the incarnation of infinite, unselfish love, would have done the same. No man is to be blamed for seeking his

own welfare. The desire to do this belongs to his nature, not as fallen, but as it came from God's hand, wearing God's image. It is to this principle of our nature that the sanctions of God's law and of his gospel, his threatenings and his promises, are addressed. In the undying longing of man's soul after blessedness, after a higher bliss than this world can furnish, the gospel finds a means of drawing him to life; for the gospel offers him the bliss he is ever craving. This is one of the "bands of a man" with which God draws us. It is right for him to respond to its offers, and run to meet the bliss it sets before him. It certainly is no more wrong for a man to fly from the perdition of his soul than to rush from a burning house. But it may be said that though it be not wrong to rush from a burning house, neither is there any moral virtue in it. The best man and the worst would act alike in this matter. So in regard to salvation. It is no more virtuous for a man to fly from the wrath to come than to fly before the fire of the prairie that is chasing him. Very well. But we will all agree that if there would be no moral virtue in flying from the flames, still it would be a crime, a most unnatural crime, not to do it, if there were hope of escape, and no moral hindrance. So it is a most unnatural crime not to escape from the wrath to come. But this is not all. There is but *one* way by which the sinner can escape the second death. It is the way of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In making his escape by that way, new affections and new purposes spring into life, and gain the control of him. He starts under the impulse of self-love, seeking his own welfare; he flies to Jesus for salvation; and while there taking the salvation, he begins to love Jesus, and the God who was manifested in him, and the Church redeemed by his blood, and the world for which he died; and so he becomes in Christ a new creature, and love, instead of selfishness, is henceforth his ruling principle. The quickening Spirit waked first his fears and hopes, his dread of suffering and desire of blessedness; then, while the sinner was seeking salvation, brought into life a higher love—the love of God and man. His self-love is not destroyed in this process—it cannot be; but it *is* brought under the guidance of that unselfish love which is like God's love, and

is henceforth to be the ruling motive of his life. From this time, so far as *this* love sways him, he seeketh not his own —

1. To the *injury of others*. We have seen that the impulse of self-love would lead a drowning man to make all efforts to gain a boat or the shore, and that this is both natural and right. But the act would take another moral aspect, if, to save himself, he were to unclasp the hands of one who was convulsively clinging to the boat, or cast him overboard, that he might occupy the place thus vacated. Here we have new moral elements. The act has changed its character. Here we have *selfishness* seeking its own at the cost of another's welfare. If the person whom he drowned for the sake of saving himself was one whom, according to the current notions of the world, he ought to love; if it was a parent, a brother, a sister, a wife, a child, then the crime seems to us most unnatural and monstrous. But, according to the gospel, *every* person is one who ought to be loved. Christian love does embrace every one. It applies the principle which I have thus illustrated to all the relations and acts of life. "Love worketh no ill to one's *neighbor*" — to any neighbor. It will not allow a man to build up his own fortune by infringing on the rights or the interests of others, or by any of the countless acts of dishonesty and fraud, or by any business which cannot prosper without working the ruin of men. It will not allow him to seek his own pleasure by anything which tends to corrupt the morals or injure the welfare of others. It will not allow him to seek his own *comfort* by habits of indulgence which are a constant annoyance to those about him. It will not allow him to seek his own spiritual gratification, or even his salvation, by depriving others of his family or his servants of privileges needful for *their* spiritual growth.

2. Love seeketh not her own *regardless of the welfare of others*. A man who escapes from a wreck in any way, by boat or by spar or by swimming, does but his duty; but if he leaves his wife and children behind, without an effort to save them, and then exults in his own deliverance while their death-cries mingle with the roar of the ocean, we regard him as a monster of selfishness. God's law says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." It permits a man to love himself. It assumes

that he will. It implies that this is his duty. It even regards one who does not love himself as so far out of the pale of humanity that it has no message for him; or, rather, it takes for granted that there is and can be no such man. But it bids every man love every neighbor as well as he loves himself; the more he loves himself, the more he must love his neighbor, so as to keep the one love always commensurate with the other; and when the occasion calls for it, he must do as much for his neighbor as for himself. He may and must labor for his own salvation, but he must be ready to do as much for the salvation of his neighbors. As he *strives* to enter the strait gate, so must he *strive* to help them in. This law the gospel adopts and illustrates. Jesus applies it directly to one's enemies. "I say unto you, *love your enemies*, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that shamefully use you and persecute you." Your enemies come within the scope of the law. Do them all the good you can. Jesus spake the parable of the Good Samaritan for the very purpose of illustrating this law of love. But love, when it reigns in the heart, needs no interpreter of the law. Love never asks, "Who is my neighbor?" Love knows her neighbor. She sees one in every man whom it is in her power to benefit. Oh! love cannot be his ruling motive who, in his efforts to secure even his salvation, or in his desire to indulge in spiritual luxury, forgets that there are other souls to be saved, and lets them perish while he exults in his own security!

3. Love seeketh not her own *when self-sacrifice would promote the welfare of others*. Love is essentially self-sacrificing when by self-sacrifice it can do good. It is so in the *relations of this life*. Witness, for example, the mother that is a mother. See how she sacrifices her comfort, her ease, her very health and life, for her children's good. Here is the noblest form of earthly self-sacrifice, and the noblest type of the Christian self-sacrifice. It is so *in God*. Witness the giving of his Son to the humiliations of an earthly life, and to that death in which he bore our sins and felt the burden of an infinite sorrow. It is to *this* the sacred writers appeal in proof that God is love. "*Herein* is love, that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Here and here only,

so far as we know, has God's love shown that it can bear the crucial test of self-sacrifice. Love is self-sacrificing *in Jesus*. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Love is self-sacrificing *in the followers of Jesus*. Witness, for illustration, the passionate outburst of love in Paul: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could even wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." This is the language of intense emotion, which stops neither to count the cost nor to weigh its words. It is *love* speaking its willingness to make the greatest conceivable sacrifices for the good of others. The passage has stumbled commentators; but the Christian heart, in some of its most exalted moods, understands it. But words are cheap and emotions transient. Paul's love did not exhaust itself in words, nor die with subsiding emotion. It controlled his life. He toiled and suffered, if by *any means* he might save some. His life's motto was, "Not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved." Listen now to the apostle John: "He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in words nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." That is but a pretence of love that does not coin itself into deeds of kindness and self-sacrifice, to meet the needs of the brethren. It must be ready, not only to give of this world's goods, but also to lay down life for a brother, as Jesus laid down his life for us.

4. Love seeketh not her own *in her efforts for the good of others*. There is such a thing as seeking a *selfish* end under the guise of doing good, such a thing as making the claims of benevolence or the cause of Christ the foundation for a superstructure of consummate selfishness. This feeling sometimes comes out plainly, as when you ask one to do some good, and receive the reply, "If I do I shall get no

credit for it." "Credit for it"! That, then, is what you are after, and not the good of men. Now this base motive does not always come out into the foreground of consciousness, so as to be seen by the mind's eye of him whom it controls. The mainspring of a watch that keeps the whole machinery in motion is out of sight. Even if you open the watch you cannot see that, unless you take the watch to pieces. Coiled up in its little case, it works by day and by night, and nobody can catch a glimpse of it, without stopping the whole machinery which it moves. So the motives which are the mainspring of our conduct are often all hidden. Coiled up out of sight, they work day and night, keeping the soul, with all its countless activities, in motion; no one sees them. Many, I fear, are swayed in what they call their good deeds by selfish motives, without being aware of it. Selfishness is subtle in its devices. It is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It leads one man to withhold his contributions from the needy, while, in the subtler form of love of applause, it leads his neighbor to give largely (if he can get credit for it), and flatters him that he is benevolent. It keeps one young man from entering the ministry; it urges another into it, and breathes in every word of that eloquence under whose magic spell hundreds are held in rapture; and this last will think, though with occasional misgivings, that he is consecrated to Christ. No sanctuary is too sacred for selfishness to invade. It enters the very Holy of Holies, and ministers before the mercy-seat, and the Shechinal cloud of God's glory. Men may build churches, and preach, and go to distant lands as missionaries, and bestow their goods to feed the poor, and give their bodies as martyrs to be burned, from pure selfishness. But under whatever guise it works, it is only evil. It is no better for entering sacred places, any more than Satan is better when he takes the semblance of an angel of light.

I do not forget that we often act from mixed motives, and that even when the prevailing motive is benevolent it may be mixed with selfishness. It is difficult for us, in our analysis of our mental states, to untwist and separate the threads of the cords which draw us. I only say that if, in our efforts to

do good to others, the *controlling motive*, the *mainspring of the soul*, is selfish, then, though we may do them good, we are at the bottom *evil*, and that, so far as these selfish motives are intertwined with our love when that controls and draws us, we are imperfect and sinful.

5. Love seeketh not her own *as the great end of life and action*. The very idea of selfishness is, that it makes a man live for *self*, and for those who are so bound to him that they are included in his conception of self, that it puts self in God's place as the end of all effort, inquiring only, in reference to any proposed act or pursuit, how it will affect the interests of self; honest only because honesty is the best policy, that is, the surest way to get rich; just only because, and only so far as, justice will contribute to his own ends; religious only because, and only so far as, religion bids fair to promote his temporal welfare, or only to effect an insurance against troubles and losses in the future; serving God "only because God outbids the devil," and using God only as an agent to bring the treasures of eternity and lay them at his feet. Now in this selfishness, which wishes to make everything without God, and God himself, so far as God is thought of or cared for, only the instrument of *self*, is the very essence of sin. It is the dethroning of God and the coronation of self in his place. In its nakedness, as it appears to the eye of God, and to the eye of reason and conscience too, in their lucid moments, it is horrible, "blasphemous *self-worship*." Love dethrones this selfishness and reënthrones God in the heart; gives self its true position as one, and only one, of God's countless subjects; as one whose interests are indeed to be cared for, and cared for by the man himself because they are intrusted to him, because they touch him as they touch no one else, because they are valuable, worth caring for, and unless he cares for them it is vain to expect that any one will, but whose interests are not supreme, and no more supreme in his own regard than in the regard of God; as one who is indeed to be loved, but not supremely as God is loved, but only as each one of his fellow-subjects is loved, so that his love for himself is always to be the measure of his love for his neighbor, that is, for each of his neighbors.

II. Love seeketh not her own. *What, then, does she seek?* For she must seek something. She must have an end and aim. Love then seeks —

1. *The glory of God.* It is impossible that genuine love should leave God out of the account, or give him only a second place. There are minds that seem restless and displeased when we tell them it is their duty to glorify God, and that he requires this; and they object to our teaching as if it were irrational, as if God himself were self-seeking if he bids his creatures live to glorify him. But love raises no such objections. It rejoices that God has opened this way to gratify its desire for some method of serving and pleasing him on whom it is supremely fixed. It does not ask, “*Must I glorify God?*” as if driven to a dreaded task, but, “*May I glorify God?*” as hasting with delight to a work and a life which it deems the highest of privileges. Instead, then, of seeing in the requirement to glorify God an evidence of self-seeking in God, it sees rather one of the many proofs of his ever-varying goodness to his children, in thus opening the way to the purest of their joys, and the gratification of the noblest of their longings. Love seeks —

2. *The welfare of Christ's Church and of Christ's cause.* It is one of the richest of the joys of love to toil and to suffer for the cause for which Jesus toiled and died. So far as this love gains the victory in its conflict with their native selfishness, *this* and not self-interest is their aim in life, kept steadily before them as their guiding-star in all life's changes. They may ask how this course or that will affect their own interests; but behind this question, as higher, deeper, more ultimate, and infinitely more important, will be the question, “How will this affect the cause of Christ and my relations to that cause, as a worker in my sphere and with my talents for its welfare?” Love seeks —

3. *The welfare of others* — of all others, so far as we can reach them; first and chiefly those that are nearest to us, because we can more easily reach them, and because in regard to these our responsibilities are greatest. In this sense, “charity begins at home” — begins her work there, because that is the work which she can best do. But charity does not always

stay at home. In most cases, she can do her work well there, and find time for work elsewhere. The neighbor whom she loves may be a sinner or a sufferer in the *next* house as well as in her own, he may be an enemy, he may be in some distant part of this land, he may be in some foreign land. It matters not; love will reach him and bless him, if she can without imperilling higher interests. Love does good at home, but she goeth about, too, like Jesus, doing good and seeking for *good to do*. To do good, to serve Christ and to glorify God in doing good, is the great aim of life. Of course the good that she will *chiefly* wish to impart will be the highest good, spiritual and eternal; but she does not refuse, but delights, to impart any good she can — relief from suffering, small or great; the comfort of a day; the pleasure, if it be innocent, of an hour.

III. *In not seeking her own, love gains her own.* It is a law of God's universe that in renouncing self, love gains for self everything that is of highest value, while he that lives for self loses everything that would constitute his real welfare. This principle is often asserted by Jesus. Here is one form of statement: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Love, in not seeking her own, gains —

1. *Her own true honor.* As love goes about doing good, she is not thinking of the credit she shall gain, but of the good she shall do. But the honor she does not seek comes to her. It may be slow in coming; but it will come at last. For a time love may be *despised*, her efforts to do good derided, she may be *hated*, persecuted, crucified, burned at the stake, by those with whose selfish and wicked aims she dares to interfere in her efforts to do good. But this will not always last. The esteem and the gratitude of the world gather at length about the martyrs who were slain for their unselfish devotion to God's glory and man's good. And the less they sought their own honor, the more honor comes to them. Heaven and at length earth and hell itself will honor him who has loved with an unselfish love like that of Jesus. It is this that gathers the adoration of the Church on earth and in heaven around our Saviour. The power of the gospel to win men lies chiefly in its sublime manifestation of the unselfishness of God, seeking

by self-sacrifice to save a race of sinners. It is by this that it has drawn to God the gratitude and the veneration and the love of so many that were alienated from him. Their enmity has been dissolved at the cross. If men could be made to believe that God was *selfish* in all this, the gospel would lose its power. Change the words of Jesus, "God so loved *the world*," so that they shall read, "God so loved *himself*, so coveted the *praises of the universe*, that he gave his only-begotten Son," and if your new version is accepted as truth, the marvellous power which has attended that saying for so many centuries departs forever. The praises of heaven for redeeming love are forever silenced. Make a corresponding change in all the passages which speak of God's love to us, and the gospel is shorn of its strength. Its power lies here, that it furnishes the highest conceivable illustration of the truth which it proclaims that "GOD IS LOVE," and that this love, so unselfish, so self-sacrificing, was in this its highest manifestation shown to *us*. Now just in proportion as our love approaches that of God in its sublime disinterestedness, it attracts to itself the honor which it does not seek, and does not seem of itself to deserve. This is beautifully illustrated in the Saviour's description of the final judgment. The two classes of men are separated and placed on the right and the left hand of the judge. "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, I was naked and ye clothed me, sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me.'" Mark their reply: "Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick and in prison and came unto thee?" Mark that almost incredulous "When?" The tone of almost unutterable surprise. They had not been looking for any such honor, nor indeed for any honor. They had simply sought to relieve Christ's poor and suffering ones. Love had wrought itself out in deeds of kindness, seeking simply to do good, not asking nor looking for praise; and *this* is the result. So it ever is.

Love seeking only to do good gathers about itself the honor which cometh from God, and angels, and men.

2. Love, in not seeking her own, *gains her own highest blessedness*. There is joy *in loving*. To love is to be blessed. God's infinite love feeds eternally his infinite blessedness. There is joy in the *labors* of love, as she goes about doing good. There is a rich blessedness in all the *self-sacrifice* of love. It is not this that she seeks. This is not her "being's end and aim." But it comes unsought. The more we forget ourselves in the toils of love, the more this blessedness fills us. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The Master, in this memorable saying, means that a life devoting itself to the toils and self-denials of love, a life whose law is not receiving but giving, not self-indulgence but self-sacrifice, is a more blessed life than one devoted, however successfully, to its own private ends. The benevolence that gives — gives not money only, but *everything*, life, soul, body, to the work of doing good — is a more blessed disposition than the selfishness that is always seeking its own and always receiving the means of enjoyment and using them for self. Jesus knew this by experience. His life was *all* giving. He, more than any one else in all this world's history, knew what it was to give. He knew, too, what it was to receive, for in his higher nature, when he was in "the form of God," he had received the homage of angels; and yet, with all this experience before him of this boundless receiving and this boundless, toilsome, painful giving, he could say, while yet he was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that it was more blessed to give than to receive. If, as I fully believe, his was the most suffering life ever lived on earth, I think also it must have been the most blessed life. And in God's infinite love is the spring of his infinite blessedness. He is the ever-blessed God because *he is love*. Even that self-sacrifice of his by which he gave his Son for the life of the world, and sympathized in the boundless sorrows of the garden and the cross, must have been to him a blessed sacrifice, for it was a sacrifice of love. Men sometimes reason as if his blessedness must have been lessened if there was any real sacrifice on his part, if the agonies of the Son wakened even a sympathetic throbbing in the bosom of the Father. Oh, they know

not the deepest mysteries of blessedness! Must not the profoundest blessedness possible for God or man, Creator or creature, be that of unselfish love, and must not that be deepest when it goes forth in self-sacrifice which results in the good of those whom it toils and suffers to bless? It may, then, almost be reverently said that the supreme moment of God's blessedness was the moment when his Son died for us; for that was the supreme moment of his self-sacrificing love.

3. Love, in not seeking her own, *gains her own highest usefulness*. The mightiest moral force in this world is the force of unselfish love, going forth on its missions of kindness. It feels, first, a constant impulse to do good, and — what is not less important — it does its work skilfully, deftly. It is *wise* to win souls. Yet more, there is a subtle moral force in character which men feel, though it may defy their analysis. Perhaps it cannot be analyzed. Perhaps it is an ultimate fact. I am not speaking now of what we call the power of example. That is mighty. But I am speaking of something more subtle than that, and more mighty. I am speaking of something which lies back of what we commonly mean by "example." *This* lies in the words spoken, the deeds done, the outward deportment; and I mean to say that the same words spoken, the same things done, by a man not seeking his own, will have vastly more moral force than if spoken and done by a selfish man. Men feel the *character*. The love which is behind words and deeds, and prompts them, touches the heart. We sometimes say of a preacher that he has magnetism. There is a power impalpable and indescribable that draws men to him and holds them there. But the strongest magnetism of the preacher is the magnetism of unselfish love. Men feel it. They may not be able to say, "This man is selfish, and this not so," but they feel this marvellous subtle power that flows from character. Words, arguments, eloquence, persuasions — these are something; they have power, but character is more, its power is greater. *Its* words and deeds influence for good or ill, men hardly can tell why. Yet more than this, far more, and more important too: the love that seeketh not her own is so completely in sympathy and fellowship with God that it secures the help of his wisdom and power and grace.

God works, as he works with no one else, with the man who seeketh not his own. When *he* plants and waters, God giveth the increase; for as God is, so is this man in the world; as God is love, so he is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Brethren, we who are ministers of Christ ought always to be swayed by this unselfish love. We preach a gospel whose highest power lies in this — that it appeals to the hearts of men through the sublime unselfishness of God. We preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who neither in life nor in death sought his own. Surely, the same spirit should be in us which breathes in every line and letter of the gospel we preach. Surely, the same mind should be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. *We* must not seek our own — our own ease, or reputation, or emolument — as our chief end, but be ready, as Jesus was, to sacrifice ease, reputation, emolument, *everything*, for the sake of our blessed Lord, and the Church that he redeemed, and the souls whom he died to save. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” *This* was the mind which was in Christ Jesus, and which must be in us, his ministers. We sometimes complain, and with some bitterness, of the hardships of our lot. Some of us are kept poor, some of us suffer from the unreasonableness of our people (possibly just a little from our own unreasonableness). Some of us are driven, as we are apt to think cruelly, from place to place. But I look at my Master, I read the story of his life, I look at his self-sacrifice for us, and I am ashamed that one word of complaint ever dropped from my lips, or a complaining thought ever nestled in my heart. We think ourselves *poor*, but when were we without a place to lay our head? We complain of hardships from the unreasonableness of men, but when did we endure like him the contradiction of sinners against ourselves? When did the waves of hatred, envy, pride, scorn, contempt, unbelief, dash against us as against him? When did we, when were we willing to, bear

our cross along the *via dolorosa*, through throngs of jeering spectators whom at our heart's core we intensely loved, and whom we would have died to save, towards the scene of our crucifixion? We talk of self-sacrifice. But where in our history is our Gethsemane, where our Calvary? Where even our willingness to take on ourselves, in our way and measure, the burden of others' sins? Oh, let us study our Saviour's life! Let us pray that the same mind may be in us that was also in him. Then will our complaints cease. Then shall we be thankful that we may know the fellowship of his sufferings. Hardship will not fret us. Pain will not get the better of patience. The unreasonableness of men, their injustice and cruelty to us, will not quench our love or silence our prayers for them. Oh, ever, when I feel ready to shrink from toil and suffering for the good of my fellow-men, ever, ever, when I feel like murmuring at the privations and hardships of my lot, do I hear the words, ringing their tones of rebuke through my very soul, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

O divine Saviour! Pity us. Root out, at whatever cost to us, the selfishness from our hearts. Give us the same mind that was in thee. Fulfil thy gracious promise to give thy Holy Spirit to *us* who ask thee; and in us may the fruit of the Spirit be *love*. Change us into thine image, from glory to glory, till we are *love* as thou art love.

XIII.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

MARK xi. 12-14.

"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon; and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever."

IT was Monday morning, the second morning of the week of our Lord's passion. The day before, he had made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and at night had gone out to Bethany, two miles east of the city, and lodged there. On this morning he started early for the city with his disciples. Perhaps they had spent the night in the open air or in a tent, and had made no provision for their morning meal; or it may be that they had lodged with their friends, and had left before the family had taken breakfast, which among the Jews was not commonly eaten till after the third hour, nine o'clock, the hour of morning sacrifice. His work pressed, and he could not wait so long before he began it. As he passed on towards Jerusalem, he felt the pangs of hunger.

This is the first of the marvels that strike us on reading this incident: how could he, the Son of God, be hungry at all? God is not hungry. How then could Jesus, if he were God, be hungry? The answer to this question is not difficult. Jesus was man as well as God. By assuming our nature, he took on himself all its weaknesses and wants. He was truly man. He was weary and slept. He was hungry and ate. He was crucified and died. It was no mere semblance of humanity which was born at Bethlehem and died at Calvary.

It was humanity itself, with all our infirmities, subject to all our wants, in all points suffering, in all points tempted, like us, with only this difference, that he suffered and was tempted, lived and died, without sin. His hunger, then, was but a necessary incident of his humanity. It belonged among the limitations to which he subjected himself when he became flesh and dwelt among us. As man, he was just as liable to hunger as you, or I, or any other man.

Being hungry, he went to a fig-tree which he saw afar off, covered with leaves, and found no fruit; for the historian tells us it was not the season of figs. Wonders thicken upon us as we proceed with this narrative. The first question here suggested is, "Why did not Jesus, who so often supplied the wants of others by miracle, thus supply his own?" I reply that he seems, from first to last, to have acted on the rule never to use his miraculous power to provide for his own wants, but only to further the great end of his mission. For the supply of his daily food, he cast himself, as you and I must, on the ordinary care of Providence. You remember that one of the temptations suggested to him by Satan in the wilderness, when after fasting forty days he hungered, was to provide for his wants by miracle. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But he repelled the temptation. He would work no miracle to relieve *his own wants*. He acted on this principle all his life. It was one of the conditions of his work on earth. He might not, and did not, separate himself in regard to anything that belonged to humanity, to its wants or to its infirmities, from the men whose nature he took that he might save them; and so he whose word sent life and vigor coursing through the arteries of the sick, himself sat tired and hungry by the well waiting for his disciples to return from the city with food, and he who fed five thousand with five loaves and two little fishes turned towards a fig-tree to appease, if he might, his own hunger with its unripe fruit. When it would relieve the wants of others and subserve the purposes of his mission, he would feed by miracle the multitudes who followed him into the deserts to hear his words; but *he* must live himself a life of poverty, and never for his own relief draw on those mighty resources

which he reserved for higher ends. And this we see to be fitting and right. How could he share in our humanity, in its wants and woes, if his divine power stood ready to satisfy his every want and to relieve his every woe? He *had* the *power*, but he never used it for himself. This was sublime self-denial. How often, when he had not a place to lay his head nor a morsel of food to allay his hunger, must he have been tempted to use for himself the power which he used so beneficently for others! How often must he have heard the tempter's whisper, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But he never yielded. He used that divine power for others, never for himself.

Here a more difficult question meets us. "How could he seem to expect fruit on that tree when there was none?" I state the difficulty in its strongest form. "If he did expect to find fruit where there was none, he was not omniscient; if he did not expect to find fruit, and went to the tree as if he did, he was not sincere. In either case, he cannot be the perfect and divine Redeemer." Such is the objection. The answer given by Trench is in substance as follows: "The design of Jesus was to use this fig-tree as the means of imparting a great spiritual lesson. Now in imparting such lessons by parables and symbols, it is not needful that everything used to convey the instruction be *historically* true; it is enough that it illustrates some great truth. Thus there is no deception in the parable of the Prodigal Son, even though no such facts as those presented ever took place. Nobody is deceived, while a great truth is vividly presented. So in this symbolic act of Jesus. He goes to that tree in order to use it as the means of illustrating and impressing a great truth which it is important that men should feel." There is something in this. Perhaps it sufficiently answers the objection. But I seek my answer in quite a different line of thought. Let me say, then, that the difficulty might be insuperable if we were considering the actions of a person with a simple instead of a complex nature, *i.e.*, a person who was only human or only divine. The difficulty meets us constantly, in one form or another, throughout the history of Jesus. He prays, and yet promises himself to answer our prayers. He hungers, and yet feeds thousands of hungry people with

food that *he* creates for the occasion. He weeps, as you or I might weep, at his friend's grave, and then raises that friend from death by his word. He predicts the future, as if it all lay open, as indeed it did, to his omniscient gaze, and yet declares that of the day and hour of his second coming not even the Son knows. He sees Nathanael pray in secret, and knows, though far off, the moment when Lazarus dies, and yet goes to a barren fig-tree, if haply he may find fruit thereon. His life seems to be a blending of contradictions into wonderful harmonies. Perhaps the difficulty is inseparable from the union of the divine and human in his person. All difficulties of this class are involved in these two verses, in the first chapter of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." If we could solve the mystery of the incarnation, we might also solve the difficulties that grow from it. Let us propose this problem for solution: "Given the union of the divine and the human in one person, so that in this person each of these diverse natures shall be complete, so that the true God and the true man shall both manifest themselves in his life and history, so that he shall show us both what God is and what man should be, how will he appear and act in the varied scenes of life?" Must there not be times when one of the two natures will seem to slumber? *Can* he show us the God if the man is always prominent? or the man if the God is always visible? We start with the union of opposites, almost of contradictions. What else can we expect but opposites, almost contradictions, in the history? What else can we expect but just such a life as the evangelists record? Will the human show itself almighty and omniscient? Can it? Must not the human ever be limited, even if taken up into union with the divine? It is only by thoughts like these that we gain the clue to that amazing history which is given us in the gospel. There were times when the divinity of Jesus shone through the veil of his humanity, when he spake and acted like God, and wrought the works of God; and there were times when he seemed as much left as any of us to a man's trials and duties, with only a man's helps, which he like us must gain by prayer. Espe-

cially for the supply of his personal wants he was thrown as completely on a man's resources as if he had not also been God. Mysterious then as it may seem, we have in the text the man Jesus going to this fig-tree as any man in like circumstances might do, looking for fruit and finding none to appease his hunger.

But here we meet another difficulty. "The time of figs was not yet." "Now," says an objector, "is it not an absurd thing for Jesus to go to a fig-tree seeking fruit, when his own historian tells us it was not the season of figs, and then to curse the tree for not bearing fruit out of season? What should we say of a man who should go into one of our orchards in April looking for ripe apples, and then should curse the trees for having no fruit on them? What then shall we say of Jesus in this transaction?" This is the objection. Let us look at it. Fig-trees then abounded in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. They were as common as apple-trees in New England. This was not the only one that grew within sight of the road that Jesus was travelling on that April morning. But there was something about this that attracted notice. *It was covered with leaves*, doubtless the only one he saw in all that morning walk that was. It was the passover week, which in that year is supposed to have been the first week in April; probably the day was the 3d of April, and it was not till later than this, not till May, that as a general fact the trees about Jerusalem put forth their leaves. This tree, then, was green with foliage while other fig-trees were bare. It thus made itself conspicuous, and attracted attention. But did this give promise of fruit? *It did*, for the fig-tree forms (of course it does not perfect) its fruit before it shows its leaves; and in very favorable circumstances a fig-tree might at this season have furnished figs that would allay the cravings of hunger. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," says, "There is a large green-colored fig that ripens very early. I have plucked them in *May* from trees on Lebanon, one hundred and fifty miles north of Jerusalem, and where the trees are nearly a month later than in the south of Palestine. It does not therefore seem impossible but that the same kind of tree might have had ripe figs at Easter, in the warm, sheltered ravines of Olivet." Its leaves were the promise that this was so. Its fault was not that it

bore no fruit out of season, but that having the leaves, the sign of fruit, it had not the reality. It stood by the wayside, a type of the hypocrite, inviting the hungry passenger to look for fruit, but not rewarding his search by a single fig.

To this fig-tree Jesus said, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever." And straightway the fig-tree withered away. Some have censured this act as if it showed him so irritated that he vented his rage by cursing an innocent tree. But if the tree was innocent, it was also void of feeling, and therefore not more unhappy than guilty. Moreover, its withering showed the working of divine power. No human rage could by a word wither from the roots a living tree so that it should stand a monument of the curse.

But, leaving such considerations, let us look at the symbolic meaning of this act. That more than justifies it. The Hebrew prophets, as you know, were wont to enforce their instructions by symbolic acts. Thus Jeremiah symbolized the coming captivity of Judah by means of a yoke. An earthen bottle dashed in pieces foretold the breaking of the nation to pieces. Nothing was more common or more impressive, among Oriental people, than this kind of teaching. It gave picture-lessons which arrested attention and fastened the truth in the memory. It would be doubly impressive if, as in the case before us, it was enforced by a miracle, the effect of which remained to remind men of its solemn lesson. To see the spiritual import of the act, let us read here our Lord's parable of the barren fig-tree, Luke xiii. 6-9. Here we have a parable so plain that it cannot easily be misinterpreted, whether in its application to the Jewish nation or to an individual. It represented the fruitlessness of that chosen people, though planted in God's vineyard and receiving his careful culture. It represented also the divine forbearance in waiting so long, and in using so many and so various means to bring them to fruitfulness, and it contained the solemn threatening that, if these last means which God was then using should prove vain, the day of their ruin was at hand.

The miracle before us is a similar parable in act, more impressive than the other because not only spoken but acted. The divine power emphasizes the divine word. The fig-tree, covered with leaves but without fruit, and doubtless rotten at

heart, is a fit emblem of the nation, abundant in the outward show of piety, yet devoid of true holiness. What fairer picture of that Pharisaic people could there be than this tree — boasting that it was in advance of all other trees — squandering its vital sap on leaves? And as it withered away, it was an emblem of the withering curse of God soon to fall on a nation of hypocrites. This theme lay heavily on the heart of Jesus during these last days. The day before he cursed the fig-tree—Sunday morning—he paused on Olivet, and wept over the city, saying, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!” The day after—Tuesday—he interrupted his terrible rebukes of Scribes and Pharisees with the plaintive words, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Later on that day, sitting on the Mount of Olives, he uttered his vivid prophecy of the swift-coming destruction of the city that lay before him. And so, during these last days when he feels himself nearing the cross, he shows by parables, by warnings, by predictions, by lamentations, his oppressive sense of the sins of his people, and of the curse soon to fall upon them. Among all these lessons, there was none more striking than this of the fig-tree. It condensed into one burning focus all his warnings, and prophecies, and parables. *That tree was Israel.* Growing by the wayside of nations, it stood covered with leaves, and unsound at heart. He who planted it and carefully cultured it goes to it, seeking *in vain* for the fruit promised by its rich foliage; and then his curse withers it. And so that blasted tree by the wayside, its withered leaves rustling in the vernal wind, and attracting the notice of the myriads who during the passover week went in and out of Jerusalem, was the most impressive of all parables. It was fitting that nature should be laid under contribution to impress such a lesson. If every barren fig-tree through all the land had instantly withered at the Master’s rebuke, the lesson thus impressed would have justified the curse.

My friends, in the symbolic import of this act there is a

lesson for all and through all time: let us, then, try to learn the lesson for ourselves.

1. What Christ mainly requires of each of us is not *leaves*, but *fruit*. By *leaves* I mean the professions and appearances which invite one to look for fruit, those outward adornings which, seen from a distance, are full of the promise of fruit. Attendance on the means of grace, a profession of religion, social prayers and exhortations—these, and things of this sort, are the leaves and not the fruit. Do not misunderstand me. I do not say that these things are worthless. Leaves are not worthless. They have very important functions. A tree could not grow, nor live long, without them. They add to its beauty. They help in the production of its fruit. If the leaves of a tree wither and fall off out of season, we say, "The tree is dying." If in the spring-time the leaves do not appear, we say, "The tree is dead." But the fruit, and not the leaves, is what the tree exists for. If there is no *fruit*, then the tree, however luxuriant its foliage, is a *failure*. Mark the terms used by the sacred writer: "Seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon." Leaves are not "anything" to a hungry man. A fig-tree was not made for the leaves, but for the figs. So the Christian must produce what I have called leaves. In him, as in the tree, if there is fruit there will be leaves. In him, as in the tree, the leaves help in the production of fruit; but it is not for the sake of these that he lives, and if he produces nothing else, he is a failure, and cumpers the ground. What, now, is the fruit? Ask Paul. His answer is, "The fruit of the Spirit is *love*" — *love* first, love for God and man. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [faithfulness], meekness, temperance," or the religious control of all the appetites and passions — *this* is the fruit which God looks for in each of us, and if he does not find *this* he finds nothing that satisfies him.

2. If we produce leaves, Christ will *specially* demand fruit. It was because the fig-tree had leaves and no fruit that his curse fell on it. Leaves were the sign of fruit. It had the sign and not the reality. This was the very burden of its offence, and of their offence whom it symbolized. Now Christ has a right to expect fruit of every one of us. But of

some of us he has a special right to expect it. They have not only received his choicest culture, but they give those promises of fruit which appear in Christian professions and in positions of honor in the Church. Looked at from a distance, as Jesus saw the fig-tree afar off, they encourage hope of the richest fruit. To such Christ comes, *seeking fruit*. He searches in that luxuriant foliage, and sometimes finds not a fig, *no fruit* of holiness. They are unsound at heart. They appear well at a distance, their words are often pious and eloquent, the most fruitful Christian has not a richer foliage than they; but we look, the Master looks, for fruit, for goodness and righteousness, for mercy and justice, for the love of God and man. We have a right to look for these. Their fair promises invite this search; and if we cannot find these, our consciences brand them as hypocrites, standing by life's wayside, inviting the hungry traveller to look for fruit, and tantalizing him with empty promises.

3. If we bear leaves without fruit, the Saviour's curse will ere long fall on us. Note the form of the sentence on the fig-tree: "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever." It is an illustration of the principle "From him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath." We see something like this going on around us if not within us, in others if not in ourselves. By a law which seems relentless as a law of nature, men lose the capacity for bearing good fruit by *disuse*. Just as in the body a member, just as in the intellect a faculty, loses its power by inaction, so in this highest department of our nature the faculty of holiness is lost by inaction. He that bears leaves without fruit becomes, in time, incapacitated to bear anything but leaves. It is a terrible process that goes on in the hypocrite's heart. He deceives himself and others, till it seems impossible that he ever should become sincere. How long it will be before the sentence falls, "No fruit grow on thee henceforth forever," we cannot tell. We only know that he is ever tending towards this fatal moment. All the laws of his nature hasten him towards the destruction, not of his being and his conscience and the amazing capacities of his soul for happiness and misery, but of that highest of all capacities, in the use and culture of which his true manhood and bliss con-

sist — the capacity for producing the fruits of holiness. What the Spirit of God, in the sovereignty and royalty of his grace, may do in him and for him, we do not know ; but that Spirit, long resisted, may say, “ From him that hath not ” — that hath no fruit — “ shall be taken away even that he hath ” — the capacity for bearing fruit. Then, though for a little while he may stand by life’s wayside bearing *leaves*, no fruit shall grow on him forever. A confirmed hypocrite, he is a confirmed reprobate. Oh, this curse of fruitlessness that comes on the fruitless — it is the most terrible of curses ! Oh, think of it — to stand forever and ever without fruit ! Now if any of you are satisfied to bear leaves without fruit, remember that *this* is to be the result — this barrenness, that satisfies you now, confirmed and perpetuated, an everlasting fact in your history. Oh, if years pass over us and we bear no fruit, we shall find, by and by, that it was not enough that we belonged to the Church, that our professions were fair, that we were deacons or ministers, that we bore many and beautiful leaves ! Where was the *fruit*?

“ Nothing but leaves, the spirit grieves
Over a wasted life ;
Sin committed while conscience slept,
Promises made but never kept —
Nothing but leaves.

“ Nothing but leaves, no garnered sheaves
Of life’s fair ripened grain ;
We sow our seeds, lo ! tares and weeds :
Words, idle words, for earnest deeds.
We reap, with toil and pain,
Nothing but leaves.

“ Nothing but leaves, memory weaves
No veil to screen the past ;
As we retrace our weary way,
Counting each lost and misspent day,
We find sadly, at last,
Nothing but leaves.

“ And shall we meet the Master so,
Bearing our withered leaves ?
The Saviour looks for perfect fruit ;
We stand before him, humbled, mute,
Waiting the words he breathes,
‘ Nothing but leaves.’ ”

Now if any of you ask how you, though hitherto fruitless, may henceforth be fruitful, our subject furnishes us with the answer. Some of you may have thought that the first part of this discourse was only speculative and doctrinal; but I recur to it now as supplying the most practical of all thoughts for this most practical part of my sermon. Jesus has been before us in his twofold nature, in his weakness and in his power, as hungry, and yet blasting the fig-tree with a word. It is as we see him thus, sharing our nature and touched with our infirmities on the one side, and on the other side partaking of the divine nature and invested with almighty power, that we approach him with confidence, hoping to obtain from him the grace we need. He knows our weakness, and he can help us. He says to you and to me, to all of us, "From *me* is thy fruit found." Remember that he was wont to use the power which blasted the fig-tree for the *salvation* of men. Judgment is his strange work. It is his chosen work to bless. He came, not to judge the world, but to save the world. While he was on earth, there was one miracle of judgment and countless miracles of mercy. He can destroy, if wisdom calls for it; but he *loves to save*. You, then, poor, struggling soul, longing to bring forth fruit unto God, but not knowing how, you may go to him for grace. He still says, "From *me* is thy fruit found." He would rather give you grace to bear fruit than condemn you for not bearing it. He *can* do either. He has often done both. One or the other he will do in your case. You must choose which. He will delight to answer your prayer for the grace that will make you fruitful in all goodness, but if you will not so pray, then, true also to the work of judgment committed to him, he will, when the needful time comes, pronounce on you the sentence of condemnation; but he will do it with feelings like those which led him to weep over the people on whom his curse was just alighting. Ah! then all is lost. No Calvary in those realms of woe. No cross there casts its shadow of love. No voice of mercy says, "Come unto me." Only the awful sentence, "No fruit grow on thee hereafter forever." "He that is unholy, let him be unholy still."

XIV.

GOD'S GUIDANCE.

PSALMS lxxiii. 24.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

MAN, in his passage through this world, needs a guide and counsellor. He is passing over this ground for the first and for the last time; and if he mistakes his way his mistake may be fatal. Often (it saddens one to think how often) has the proverb been fulfilled, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death." Whom, then, shall he choose for his guide and counsellor? On the practical answer to this question hang his highest, his only enduring, interests. The Psalmist chose *God* for his guide. I would like, my friends, to induce you all to make the same choice. I think I can show you that it will be *wise* to make it; but whether I can persuade you actually to make it is quite another question. I can only present the truth, and pray God to render the presentation effectual.

I. Let us look at the *methods of the divine guidance*. "Thou wilt guide me *with thy counsel*." God's counsel may mean either the directions he gives to us or the plan he marks out for himself in guiding us. It includes the guidance of his Word, of his Spirit, and of his Providence.

1. *Of his Word*. This he gives us as the chart of the way he would have us walk. And it is plain enough for all practical purposes. Its great guiding principles are easily found, and easily applied, in almost all the exigencies of life. Whatever may be true of particular cases of conscience or ques-

tions of casuistry, it is true, as a general fact, that the right way and the wrong way are not so much alike that one of them needs to be mistaken for the other; and even in cases of conscience, the difficulty generally arises from not considering that *duty always lies in a straight line*. "It is the shortest possible distance between two points, your soul and right." The crooked, circuitous route is pretty sure to be wrong. The Bible is not an obscure book. Good men may hold conflicting creeds on some points of religious philosophy, but no man with this Book in his hand *need* be in doubt as to the way of life. In giving it to us, God in effect says, "You need counsel. *Here it is*. Consult this in every emergency. Imbue your heart with its spirit. Mould your character by its principles. Follow its directions; and, whatever mistakes you may make in particular acts, you will not go far astray, nor fail of everlasting life."

2. God guides us by his *Spirit*. God's Spirit is a real guide. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And the Spirit leads us *just where the Bible would guide us*. "What need, then, of his guidance at all! Why not just give us the Bible, and let us follow that?" Because that is not enough. Sin has so blinded and enslaved us that we need more. We need to be reminded of the directions of the Bible. We need to be enlightened as to the meaning of its principles, and their application to our conduct. We need to be strengthened in the difficulties and dangers of the way. We need often to have our reluctance to the self-denials and the holiness enjoined in the Bible displaced by better affections. We need an internal stimulus to duty. We need something to speak more closely to our souls than even God's word can do, when it only addresses us through the outward eye or ear. The Holy Spirit does all this for us. He suggests to us our duty, enlightens our minds, strengthens us, stimulates us, and whispers to us, "This or this is the way, walk ye in it." His guidance is thus a blessed reality, as real, and more effective, than if we had an angel from heaven visibly with us, walking by our side, and teaching us always and everywhere what course to pursue and what to do.

3. God guides us by his *Providence*. There is often a

rich mine of truth in a word, if we but know how to work it. In this case, we need not work very deep. The providence of God is simply God's providing for the future — ever linking the present with its issues in coming time and eternity. For those who commit themselves to his guidance, it is a providing for all the exigencies of their lot, so that they may pass safely through all, and that all things shall work together for their good. He is thus always providing for them — to-day for to-morrow, this year for next year, now for all the future, and so providing after the counsel of his own will. Providence, then, is not fate, nor anything like it. Fate is blind, sees nothing, provides for nothing. Providence is full of eyes, sees all things, actual and possible, in all their relations and results, provides for everything. All is planned, the position of each thing in the system determined, not by a blind necessity, but by a wise and beneficent forethought. It is thus not by occasional interferences, unexpected deliverances, strange coincidences only, that he provides, but by every event of life. He is not more in the thunder, the tempest, the earthquake, than in the still small voice. "*All things are yours*" — the world, life, death, things present, things to come, things little and things great, all are yours. It is this divine counsel, not capricious but wise, not arbitrary but benevolent, that now opens the way for his children in this direction where they had not thought of going, and closes it in that where they had meant to go. It is this that frustrates their plans, prevents them from gaining the objects on which their hearts are set, keeps them poor when they long and toil to be rich, holds them in obscurity when they are ambitious of honor, but even by means of these disappointments securing for them a better and more enduring good than they lose. Ever is he thus providing — to-day making provision for to-morrow. We do not see yet what he is aiming at, and hence we wonder at his dealings. But sometimes — even in our earthly history — the present clears up the mysteries of the past, the future will clear up the mysteries of the present. What he does we know not now, *but we shall know hereafter*. These are mysteries only because we have not the foresight of God. Give us that, and the mysteries of Providence are gone for-

ever. God does not need miracles to fulfil his counsel. Though every step of our life is guided by that counsel, he leads us on by the gentle force of ordinary occurrences. All seems natural. Hence many see no God in their history. Yet God has been there, providing always, and by means of every event in their lives. The slightest circumstances often determine a man's position and lot in life. A word of a friend or a stranger dropped without thought of its results, the detention for a moment when one is in haste and impatient to be gone, the failure of a letter or a train of cars to reach its destination in due time, the introduction to new acquaintances — either of these, or of a thousand other things seemingly as trivial, may do it. God is in all these, guiding us who are blind to the future along a way which we know not, but always guiding us by his wise and good counsel.

II. Let us consider the *conditions on which we may secure this guidance*. God is willing to be your guide. I beg of you to believe this. The want of faith here prevents many from yielding themselves to his guidance. Why should you doubt? He assures you in various ways, and with all the strength and tenderness which a father's heart can impart to his language, that he longs to guide and to save every one of you. I beseech you not to be suspicious of God. It is not *he* who is unwilling to guide you, it is *you* who will not yield to his guidance. There is not one of his lost children who are wandering on the dark mountains whom he would not gladly lead along the homeward path. But—

1. You must *consent to his guidance*. He cannot lead you without your consent, and he must do it in *his* way, not in yours. You must not refuse to obey his word, you must not resist his Spirit, you must not rebel against his providence. You must ask daily, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" But you must not, while pretending to ask counsel of him, follow the impulses of your own selfishness. You must do everything as he bids you. God will guide you if *you* consent to it. Could the terms be easier? If you take him for your guide, you cannot expect to have your own way. You consent to give up your inclinations when they conflict with his will, and the dictates of your own wisdom when they

conflict with his counsel. *His* way must be *your* way, chosen by you because prescribed by him.

2. You must *study his word*, and become familiar with its precepts and its great guiding principles, hiding it in your heart, and holding it ready to be applied in every exigency of life.

3. You must *ask for his guidance*. "Ask and ye shall receive." This is his rule: if we ask for light, we shall have it. If we ask for the Holy Spirit, he will lead us, and so lead us that, whatever others may think, we shall not go far aside from God's benignant plan in regard to us. They may think we blunder, but what they call our blunders will be wrought into God's designs of love, and work together with all things else for our good. Thus consenting to God, and praying and looking for light, we shall not only have his providence to guide us by hedging up our way on this side and opening it on that, but also his Spirit to bring our views and choices into harmony with God, so that we shall choose for ourselves what he chooses for us. It is a part of the office of the Holy Spirit thus to lead us by private suggestions and an inner light, giving us true views of duty. Yielding to him, we shall always see what our next duty is, where we shall take the next step, and that will prepare the way for the next, and so on. Neither the providence nor the Spirit of God will teach us now what to do hereafter, but only what to do now (save that we are always to obey the precepts of the gospel and the great commands of the law). Now do we *need* to see far before us? Suppose we do not know through what scenes, over what mountains of difficulty, along what valleys of humiliation, he means to lead us on our way to glory. Enough that God is our guide, and that *he* knows. "The *steps* of a good man are ordered by the Lord" — one step at a time. The whole path lies before him, but for us only the next step is marked out. We shall not see the whole till we see it in the past, and then we shall see that, if we sought the divine guidance, that path was the best for us, and that each step was kindly ordered.

4. *You must study the dealings and leadings of Providence*. He has a plan which he is pursuing with each of us,

and by falling into that plan, and working in it, and submitting to its discipline, we shall fulfill our life's work. Partly by the changes of his providence, he shows us what he has for us to do. But we must decide on our duty in all these changes according to the principles of his word and the suggestions of his Spirit. The fact that a way is opened before us in providence is not of itself proof that we should enter that way. The opening may be for the trying of our faith ; but it is a reason why we should prayerfully consider the question thus presented to us. And herein lies a means of moral improvement. We sometimes wish we had the pillar of cloud and of fire—or something like it—to go before us and show us, by its visible motions, where to go and when to stop. This would be convenient, but less profitable for us than this constant call for thought and prayer in deciding questions that are pressed upon us. We must throw all the light we can on such questions, consider the way by which God has led us to them, our talents, our training, our fitnesses, where we shall be safest, where we shall be likely to grow fastest in grace and to be most useful ; and in view of all these things, and after earnest prayer for God's direction, we must decide, and then pursue the course thus indicated to us. Now we never go through such a process of prayer and of examination of self, of God's dealings, and of the principles of duty, and push it to an honest conclusion, without spiritual profit.

Nor may we shrink from a course which to-day seems best, from the fear that to-morrow new light may make some other course seem still better. If we yield to such fears, we shall never decide ; for after to-morrow, will come another to-morrow, and after that another, and each of these may bring new light. If the time has come for deciding, decide with the light you have ; for it is by that light your heavenly Father means to guide your next steps. If, before deciding, he wished you to see some other light, he would give it to you now. If to-morrow some other course than the one you have irrevocably chosen should seem preferable, even that need not disturb you nor cause you regretfully to say, "If I had known that, I should have done differently," for you did not know

that. God did not mean you should know it before you acted ; for with that light you would have acted less wisely than without it. For to you it would have been but a partial, misleading light. To-morrow, in its new light, the course you chose may seem to you unwise, but the day after, or a little further on, you may see that it is the wisest and best course you could have taken. Remember that in all things, in apportioning the light we shall have, as well as in all things else, God is providing not for the morrow only, but for all the future.

5. If you seek God's guidance, you must do faithfully and without complaint your duties wherever his providence places you. Your sphere may be, or seem to you to be, lowly, obscure, narrow. No matter for that. It is *there* you are to find your duties, so long as he keeps you there. Do not fancy that the reason why you are not better and more useful is because your sphere is too small. No ! that is not the reason. God guided you *thither*, that you might serve him *there*, and so fit perhaps for some larger sphere, which, while you are fitting for it, he is providing for you. There you will find, if not the work to which you seem to yourselves and to your partial friends most adapted, at least the discipline and training which you most need. Moses, keeping the flock of Jethro in the desert, seems to be much out of place. Can he, with all his wisdom and learning, find for the forty best years of his life nothing better to do than keeping another man's sheep ? Is this the sphere for Moses, the poet, the statesman, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, fitted to be a leader of men, the greatest man of his times, and one of the greatest characters in all history ? Yet God is providing — preparing his servant there for the greatest work to which any man was called before the advent of Christ. Moses is now becoming familiar with the region through which he will lead God's people on their way to the promised land. He is communing with God and learning of him in solitude, and amid the wildest and the sublimest scenes of nature. He is gaining wisdom and elevation of character for the great work of his life, and training in the desert, not less than in the schools of Egypt, to be the leader and the law-giver of God's chosen people. And this situation of yours which seems to you so

unfitting enters into God's plan of life for you. He may open the way out of it soon, and probably all the sooner if you do cheerfully and well what you find there to do. It is often true, in this world as well as in the next, that he who is faithful over a few things becomes, when his fidelity is proved and confirmed, ruler over many things, and enters into the joy of his Lord.

6. If you seek God's guidance, *you must submit to all his methods of discipline*. Remember that suffering, in some of its many forms, is essential to our moral training. God afflicts us, that we may be partakers of his holiness. He makes us perfect through suffering. What forms of it will in our case best answer its beneficent ends, it is not for us but for God to decide. It is for us to submit to it and to improve it, in whatever form it may come. Property must be taken from some of us; children, the best beloved, must be buried from some families; slander be permitted to gnaw into the reputation of others. And because, in the mystery of God's forethought, some souls are to have tasks and stations of peculiar honor offered them in his kingdom, from these one after another of the dearest joys must vanish, light after light be quenched, child after child droop into a sick-bed and then into the infinite silence, till all are gone and all is still. Uncongenial companionships, unreasonable tempers, unreturned affections, unforeseen calamities to property, pinching poverty, slow disorders that tire out patience—I need not enumerate the legions of ever-active ministers, busy throughout men's dwellings, never invited, but forcing their way in, ordained to discipline us into independence of the world, into heirship in immortality. It is thus, by

This process slow of years,
This discipline of life,
Of outward woes and secret tears,
Sickness and strife,
Our idols taken from us one by one,
Till we can dare to live in God alone,

that he trains us for our work and for heaven. In the midst of all, our prayer must be, "Father, thy will be done. Sustain and sanctify us."

“Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee,
Even though it be a cross
That raiseth me.”

Oh, it were sad if all these trials, so hard to bear and so fitted to do us good, should be lost! What a spectacle is that, of a man who has passed through some great sorrow and is no better for it! It is a spectacle over which an angel of God, in his flight round this world on his ministries of love, might pause to weep! It is a sight to sadden heaven! Oh, how sad for the sorrows of time to issue in the deeper sorrows of eternity!

III. We look briefly at the ISSUE of this divine guidance. “And afterward receive me to GLORY.” Glory, then, is the issue. What, now, is the glory to which God is leading his people? I answer now only so far as the answer results from the preceding discussion. It is, then, the glory of a completed life of which the most has been made; first, as a sphere of usefulness and of preparation for higher usefulness, and secondly, as a scene of moral discipline. It is glory indeed to make the most and the best of life. But this cannot be done in the methods of self-will, but by following God’s guidance and working in his methods. I am doing most for God’s cause and for man’s good when I am most controlled by God’s will and spirit, and working in his plan. This too is the best preparation for higher service hereafter. God is now training his people for posts of honorable service in the future world. In the figurative language of the Bible, they will be kings, sharing under Christ regal responsibilities and performing regal duties, one set over ten cities, another over five, each occupying some position of honorable service in the kingdom of God. For these positions he is now fitting us. All this toil of earth, if it is toil in his plan and under his lead, helps forward the preparation. And be it remembered that all the true honor there is in creation is connected with service, with ministry, faithfully fulfilled. The service of God, in some office of trust for which he is now fitting us, will constitute the highest glory of heaven.

This world is also a scene of moral discipline. In this discipline God's providence, and word, and Spirit are the factors, and we decide whether it shall gain its ends or not. It gains its ends in proportion as we obey the word, yield to the Spirit, and improve the dealings of providence. It is glory indeed to gain the victory over one's self. It is more to rule one's spirit than to take a city. To help us in this righteous control over self, bringing every thought and our whole being into obedience to Christ, God varies his dealings with us. We fall in with his gracious designs when, in every new situation, under every new trial, we do the duties and cultivate the graces which the exigency calls for, until at length we appear in his image, sharing in what is his highest glory, the glory of his purity and love. And in sharing this, we shall share his blessedness also, and know the joy which is full of glory, and the glory which is full of joy.

And then, when that glory shall be revealed to us and in us, shall we remember all the way which the Lord our God hath led us, to humble us and to prove us. Then all these trials under which we sometimes groan and our faith reels as if it were about to fall, all these changes that were forced upon us and that seemed so strange to us, will be seen to have had their uses in our discipline. Then shall "we mark with wonder and gratitude those mysterious paths along which we walked as it were blindfolded towards the blessed destination seen by God alone." We shall see that in all and through all he was with us, strengthening us, setting us forward, interested in all the little improvements we made, and making each change a step in the ladder of our ascent towards the highest glory of our spirits.

My friends, let me ask of each of you one question: Will you consent to be guided by God? If not, why not? Do you not like the Guide? Is he not wise enough, strong enough, good enough? Or is it the way you do not like? But why not? It is the way of holiness, safe and peaceful, with the unfading sunshine of God's smile upon it. Or is it the end you do not like? But, surely, you do not prefer the destruction to which the ways of sin lead, to the glory to which God leads his people. Either, my friend, consent to the proffered

guidance of God, your Father, or else find some reason for not consenting, which will satisfy your own conscience now, and which you will dare to render to your Judge, when, beyond the line that parts time and eternity, he asks your lost and trembling spirit, "Why did you not accept of me as your guide through life?"

But whatever may be your decision, it shall be my joy through all the days of my pilgrimage, that I can look up to him and say, "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Father, Saviour, I lay my hand in thine, lead me as thou wilt, through what sorrows, disappointments, difficulties, trials; only lead me in thy wisdom along the paths of holiness to the glory of thy redeemed.

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home —

Lead thou me on!

Keep thou my feet: I do not ask to see

The distant scene — one step enough for me.

"So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still

Will lead me on,

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone,

And with the morn those angel faces smile

Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

XV.

GREATER WORKS.¹

JOHN xiv. 12.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father."

THESE, to the apostles, must have been amazing words. The works of Jesus had been great. At the very beginning of his ministry, Nicodemus had said to him, "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Not long after, he had been able to say to the messengers sent by the Baptist to ask if he were indeed the promised Messiah, "Go and show John the things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Time passed on, and such works were multiplied. Now, as he is about to leave his disciples, he reminds them of these mighty works of his, in order to sustain their faith in the great trials already darkening over them. He goes further. He assures them that those who believe in him should not only do works like his, but *greater* works; "because," he adds, "I go to the Father." This "exceeding great and precious promise" seems to reach even to us who believe in Jesus, and claims our attention. Let us try to find its meaning and learn its practical lessons.

I. What, then, is its meaning? "The works that I do shall

¹ Delivered before the Conference at New Britain, June 12, 1890, four days before Mr. Woodworth's death.

he do also." I will give him power to work such miracles as mine, so far (of course only so far) as needful for the great ends of my mission. "Greater works than these shall he do." This cannot mean that the disciples should surpass the Master in the working of miracles. None of them did this. Nothing in their history surpasses, or equals, the raising of the widow's son at Nain, or Lazarus at Bethany, from the dead. Our Lord was pointing to something greater and better than the miracles which strike the senses and waken the wonder of men. The raising of souls from spiritual death to spiritual life is greater than all miracles—itself the convincing sign of the divine origin of the gospel, to be repeated among all nations and in all ages. In *this* class of works the disciples did surpass the Master. They were not better preachers, but they were more successful preachers, than he. His labors were not without success in this class of works; but it was not this of which his disciples would mainly think when he spoke of the works which he did. But it was this which chiefly marked *their* ministry after his departure. Read the Gospels, and you are struck by the multitude of miracles; read the Acts of the Apostles, and you are struck by the multitude of conversions. Probably more were converted under the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost than under all the sermons and instructions of Jesus and his disciples during his entire ministry,—three thousand to five thousand. The work thus begun at Jerusalem went on there until, within six or eight years, thousands, probably tens of thousands, of all classes, — even "a *great* company of the *priests*," — became obedient to the faith; and then, passing over the bounds of Jerusalem and Palestine, it gathered churches of living Christians in all parts of the then known world. It was an era not without miracles, but the splendor of its miracles was lost in the glory of its converting work. A new world—a world of spiritual life—rose under the labors of the humble believers in Jesus. Nor were these works confined to that age. Faithful men in all ages have performed them, and some even in our own times have nearly or quite equalled the apostles in turning sinners to God. Now in what respects are these works greater than miracles?

1. They are more *difficult*. Look at a soul which, in the language of Scripture, is *dead* in sin. What have we here? A soul in which the will, the central and controlling power, has departed from God and taken the affections and desires, the whole man, along with it; which has dethroned God and enthroned self in his place; a soul in which mighty selfish passions are smouldering, and ready at the breath of provocation to rage and burn; in which are the seeds or the germs, or rank growth and ripening fruits, of all sins. What is to be done *for* that soul and *in* it? It must be brought to renounce its pride and accept of Jesus Christ as its Saviour. It must dethrone self and enthrone God. Love—love for God and love for man—must become its ruling principle. Its thoughts and its affections and its aims must become pure and spiritual. It must become a *new* creature in Christ Jesus—new in no figurative and superficial sense, but in the deepest sense in which the word can be used when applied to character. What can effect this change? There is nothing in nature, nothing in the known order of cause and effect, or in human means and persuasions, that can effect it. Try it on the next ungodly man you meet. I care not who or what he is. Try to make a *new* man of him, so that henceforth he shall love God supremely and serve God cordially, so that he shall forsake, not one sin only, but *all sin*,—sin in its root-principle, which is selfishness and ungodliness,—and practise, not one virtue only, but all virtues, all holiness, and do this, not by the restraint which a strong will puts on evil within him, but as the outflowing of spontaneous, joyous life and love. You may startle him, convince him of his danger, and of the wisdom and beauty of the new life to which you call him, but *alone* you can no more impart to him that life than you can raise the dead. It requires power above your own, and *more than mere power*. What is to be done here is so to change a man's character that he shall be a *new* man, everything, purposes, affections, desires, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, *EVERYTHING* new within, except his constitutional faculties, with their capacity for endless growth, and the dying remnants of old habits, old passions, and old sins. This is a *more difficult* work than to raise the dead. To the latter there is

no resistance: the former meets the mighty resistance of man's rebellious will—the strongest thing in the universe except the will of God; and this resistance must be overcome, that the will which is now carrying the whole soul away from God may return to him, bringing the whole soul with it in penitence and faith and love. If you have seen such a transformation as this, you have seen a greater work than the raising of Lazarus.

2. Such works are more *important* than miracles. I appreciate the worth of the beneficent miracles of Jesus. I think of the joy in the heart and home of the widow of Nain when she received alive the son whom she was going out to bury. It must have alleviated the sorrow of the Man of sorrows that he could do such works. But they did not necessarily heal the soul's malady. A man might be cleansed from the leprosy of the body and not from the fatal leprosy of the soul. His eyes might be opened to the beauties about him while they continued closed to the spiritual beauties of God and his gospel. He might be raised from the grave and not from death in sin. In his strange passage to and from the spirit land, he might have failed to make the infinitely more important passage from spiritual death to spiritual life. Nor is this all. Miracles lengthened life and added to its comfort, but they did not make men immortal. The eyes and the ears which Jesus opened must soon close again in death. The sick who had been cured must be sick again and die. The daughter of Jairus, the youth of Nain, and Lazarus must again go through the gates of death. Centuries ago, those whom Jesus cured and the families which he thus gladdened passed away from this world. And if they were not led to ask spiritual life and health from him, how little does it concern them now that they once felt his healing power, except as they sadly remember how near they once were to the fountain of true life. But grace, when it renews a man, changes his character and destiny for all the future. It breaks the power and removes the curse of sin. It restores him to the lost image and fellowship of God. Myriads rejoice to-day in the results of the conversions which took place in the days of Jesus and his apostles. After eighteen centuries, these results are im-

mensely richer than at first. They will grow richer forever. We suppose Lazarus of Bethany to have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, as well as raised from the tomb by the power of Jesus. If to-day we could ask him, "Which do you regard as the better work—that by which you were raised from the tomb, or that by which you were quickened to spiritual life?" what think you would be the reply? Would it not be something like this, "The miracle dwindles into insignificance, compared with that work of grace which restored me to fellowship with God and to endless holiness and joy"?

3. Conversions to God were the *very end for which miracles were wrought*. The end must be greater than the means. Miracles were not wrought for their own sake, but for the purpose of leading men to faith and thus to eternal life. "Believe me," our Lord says, "for the works' sake." John, in closing his memoirs of Jesus, says, "Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name." *This*, then, was the main reason why Jesus wrought miracles and why John recorded them; namely, to lead men to faith in Jesus, and thus to their soul's true life. That whole magnificent train of miracles was but a means of which this was the end. For this, mainly, Jesus gave sight to the blind, healing to the sick, and life to the dead. For this he gave to his disciples a like power. But mark what use they made of it. They used it as a soldier uses his rifle—as an instrument of defeating the enemies of salvation. They used it as a physician uses his medicines—as a means of curing the maladies of the soul. They never stopped to admire a miracle, or to exult in it. No sacred historian stops for any such purpose. In *itself*, it was nothing to them. They wrought it as God enabled them, and then pressed on, using it to help forward their great work of saving souls. On *that* work their eye was ever fixed. To work a miracle was nothing to them compared with saving a soul—nothing except as it helped them to win souls. We see no such miracles now as were needful then, but we *do* see true conversions from sin to God. The end is in some degree secured for which this means was ever used. Whether it

will ever again be needful to resort to this means, no man certainly knows; but if it should be needful it will be done, and then miracles will be what they always have been — aids in the more difficult work of turning men from sin to God.

II. Let us look at the reason our Lord here gives why his disciples should do these greater works: "Because I go to the Father." We look at him first on his way to the Father. *His* way to the Father was through the woes of the cross, the dishonors of the sepulchre, the triumph of his resurrection, and the glory of the ascension. Now it is just this story which has arrested the attention, and won the faith and the love, of men. It is a marvellous and touching story. Told anywhere, told to the inhabitants of some distant world for whom the Son of God did not die, it would hold their fixed attention and waken their warmest emotions. But what shall we say, and what feel, when we catch a glimpse of its deeper meaning; when we gain an insight into its mysteries of love; when we see, just here more than anywhere else, the image of the invisible God, the heart of the Father in the sufferings of the Son! What shall we say, and what feel, as, standing before this cross, we are told that here is the sublime manifestation of the unselfishness of God, the crowning proof that God is love, the only proof ever given to this world which has in it the element of self-sacrifice! What shall we say, and what feel, when we know that it is for *us* this Son of God is suffering, that he is bearing *our* sins and carrying our sorrows, until his heart breaks under the mighty burden! It is here, at this meeting point of heaven and earth, that men become reconciled to God. The apostles could speak, and we can speak, of all this as *done*, as *actual history*. We can point, as he could not, to *his cross*, and to the unsearchable riches of love there manifested. But what does Jesus do, now that he has gone to the Father? He gives the Holy Spirit. For reasons which commended themselves to God's wisdom, it was not till after his death and ascension that the Spirit could be given in such measure as to form a new era in the history of the Church — an era divinely named, in distinction from all former eras, "the dispensation of the Spirit." "It is," says our Lord, "expedient for you that I go away, for

if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Now note the connection of the text with the first distinct promise of the Comforter. "He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask *anything* in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." Observe, also, how Peter explains the wonders of the Pentecost. "This Jesus whom ye crucified hath God raised up. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." This, then, is what Jesus is doing, now that he has gone to the Father. He is fulfilling his promises. He is answering prayer. He is pouring out his Spirit. *On his way to the Father, he furnished the most effective motive by which man's heart can be won to God.* Now that he is with the Father, he supplies the only effective agency by which this motive can be applied. He did not forsake his Church when he ascended to heaven. He still lives for it. He is with us always, even unto the end of the world. In fulfilling his promises, he endued his apostles with power; but that was not only, nor chiefly, the power of working miracles, but that mysterious spiritual power by which they imparted the true life to others. And this is a gift, not for one age only, but for all ages. The promise is that the Comforter will abide with the Church forever. This power also is promised to the whole Church through all time — belongs to those who *believe*, by virtue of their union with Christ. It is a power needful to fit the Church for her work. The power by which in all ages some have been instrumental in saving so many is not the gift of great talents or genius or learning, but the power from on high given to them by the Holy Spirit, working *in* them and *by* them. In conclusion: —

1. The subject shows us what is the real, enduring sign of

the divine origin of Christianity. We do not see now such signs as Jesus and his apostles wrought. Is, then, the gospel dependent wholly, or mainly, on proofs given eighteen centuries and more ago? I do not hesitate to say that a religion from God must, in its passage through the ages, carry its credentials with it, in what it is and in what it does. Paul said at Lystra, God "left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." What he is doing to-day testifies to his goodness and power. We need not go back to the creation to gather our proofs. We need not dig away the old geological foundations to find "the footprints of the Creator." "Footprints!" His handiwork is before us every day. He is turning out now before our eyes the ever-fresh products of his skill and goodness. So of Christianity. We are not driven to the past for its proofs. It is here to-day as a divine reality, showing in what it *is*, the stamp and seal of God, and producing effects which show that God works *in* it and *by* it. It imparts life. It transforms character. It leads to God, and so proves that it came from God. It does every year, and somewhere every day, greater works than miracles. Thus the proofs that it was born from the heart of God have been accumulating every year for eighteen centuries. Every genuine conversion to God, every true Christian life and death, adds to them. Every revival of true religion multiplies them. If, then, you ask for its credentials, I point you to this astonishing miracle of spiritual regeneration. I take you into the midst of a spiritual revival, when the strong man bows before the might of God's Spirit, and the proud scorner becomes humble, and the profane prayerful, and the impure chaste, and the dishonest righteous, and holy joy lights up the faces of scores of converts. Such scenes save us the trouble of proving that the gospel is from God. *They prove it.*

2. The subject suggests a reason why the work of conversion goes on *so slowly*. Slowly, I mean, compared with our wishes, and compared with what God's promises would lead us to hope for. The promise in the text is to those who *believe*. If, then, we fail in power, it is because we fail in faith. A man may have faith enough to secure his own salvation,

and not enough to give him spiritual power over his fellow-men. For this he must be thoroughly vitalized by faith. He must be *full of faith*, and therefore full of the Holy Spirit. How small, brethren, is our faith compared with the greatness of the promises! Take the promise which follows the text: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. If ye shall ask," etc. Do Christians believe this promise with a faith that leads them to pray for and to hope for the fulness of spiritual blessings? Do we who are preachers *so believe it?* Does our faith fire our hearts, and fill us with a holy earnestness which cannot be satisfied unless by some means it can save some — which reasons, pleads, warns, exhorts, weeps, gives itself up, with self-sacrificing love, to save the lost? This is the highest power of the ministry; and to gain it is worth all it can cost of prayer, and conflict with sin and self, and long and trying discipline of Providence. Let us look for it by faith and prayer, not satisfied till we get it, till our hearts shall glow like the heart of Jesus with compassion for souls. Oh, brethren, having such a gospel to preach to souls so soon to be saved or lost forever, and having such a Holy Spirit to help us, pleading in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech men by us, it is a *crime* for us to be dull!

3. The subject encourages us in our Christian effort. Such effort, wisely used by men of faith, will never be unavailing. Faith has as much power as ever. It is still in alliance with God. If miracles should ever be needed again for any good purpose, it can perform them again; if not, it can without miracles gain the great end for which miracles were ever wrought. With great faith we should attempt great things for God, as expecting great help from God; and we should not be disappointed. What might not these churches accomplish if all their members, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, were laboring for Christ and for souls! Our encouragement could not be greater if each of us were visibly attended by legions of ministering angels — no, not so great, if that were all; for He is with us who is wiser and stronger than all the angels, and at whose bidding all angels fly. Let us, then, go in this our might and fulfil our mission. We go not as

miracle workers, but, with God's help, to do greater works than these.

In the profoundest sense, the blind shall receive their sight, the deaf shall hear, the lame shall walk, the lepers be cleansed, and the dead be raised, as we go preaching the gospel to the poor. Finally, the subject illustrates the value of salvation. "*Salvation.*" See what God has done to secure it! Look at that wonderful train of miracles, all subservient to this! But there was much more than miracles. For *this*, for man's salvation, was the miracle of the incarnation; for this, Christ's life of sorrow and his death of agony; for this was the mission of the Holy Spirit; for this, the ministry of angels; for this, all the means and appliances of grace. And all this was not too much. Ah, who shall tell what a soul is worth, and how much it is worth to save it when fallen and lost! Oh, it seems as if by sin we had lost the power of measuring ourselves, and so it happens that God's methods of saving us seem to involve a needless outlay of condescension and suffering! But let the sinner realize the ruin which sin has wrought in him, let him engage in the desperate struggle with guilt and corruption, and he will not be likely to think that Jesus, divine as he is, is too great a Saviour. It is a mighty Saviour that he wants, one that can work in his soul, such a one as was typified by the miracles of Jesus; for he feels that *he* is blind, deaf, leprous, and dead, and must have health and life from life's Giver. To him now the gospel seems reasonable, the perfection of reason, because it offers him an almighty Saviour and a great salvation. He believes it, rests upon it, accepts its offers, and finds life, and peace, and love. Saved by the grace of a divine Saviour, through his incarnation and atonement, and by the mighty working of the Holy Spirit whom he sends.

CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE.

*Discourse at Centennial of Berlin Church, Aug. 25, 1875.*¹

Ps. lxxvii. 11-13.

"I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy works and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary."

BRETHREN and friends, I confess that it was with pleasure that I received and accepted the invitation of your committee to occupy this place to-day. Not by any means that I deem myself better qualified than some others would be for the service; but I love this church. I began here my ministerial work. I spent ten of the best years of my life here, — years of youthful hope and growth, — and here became familiar with the joys and the sorrows, not only of pastoral, but also of domestic life. To this place I brought my first wife, as our earliest and only home, and here I buried her. Here I married my second wife. Here four of my children were born and one of them was buried. Is it wonderful that from my distant home on the prairie my heart often turns with longing to this home of my early years and this church of my first love? It was this feeling which led me, when the invitation of your committee reached me, promptly and even joyfully to accept it. Still I should have hesitated, and perhaps declined, had not the committee, in giving me the invitation, intimated that I might make free use of a discourse which I prepared and delivered here while I was pastor, on an occasion of which I shall speak by and by.

But was it not a bold thing to plan for this celebration in such a year as this? "The nation's heart has been on pil-

¹ Printed by special request.

grimage" to Lexington and Concord, to Ticonderoga and Bunker Hill, and waits but the striking of the fitting hours to visit other scenes where, one hundred years ago, the springs were opened whence has flowed the ever-broadening river of our nation's life. At such a time as this, what prospect was there of awakening any interest in the centennial of a single church, not large, in a quiet country village, and with a history in no way marked or peculiar? Your attendance in such numbers here to-day, and your looks of eager interest, assure me that even in this year you do not regard the event we celebrate as of inferior importance. The formation of a church to live and work through the ages, to take its place among the moral forces of the country and the world, to maintain the institutions of the gospel, and to bear its blessings and its hopes to myriads of hearts, is not a small thing, unworthy of notice, even in the history of a nation like ours. Indeed, without its churches, with their mighty moral and religious influences, our nation would have been very different from what it is to-day. They have done more than anything else to give it its greatness and its power. Besides, if in a large sense this great country is your home, this beautiful place is, in a sense far closer to your hearts, your home; and this church may almost be said to be the mother of you all; and it is with filial feelings that you have come hither, to look back to the hour of your mother's birth, to trace her history, to see what blessings she has scattered from her benignant hands, what children she has sent forth to bless the world, and how she looks to-day with her locks whitened by the frosts of a hundred winters.

As this society is an offshoot of the Kensington Society, as the first meeting-house of that society and its first burial-place, where its first minister lies buried, were within the limits of this parish, it seems proper that I should outline the history of that society previous to the division in which this had its origin.

This was then in the south-eastern corner of Farmington. For a number of years these settlers attended public worship in Farmington village, and it is said that women sometimes walked the whole distance — not less than eight miles — carry-

ing their infants in their arms. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." This place was then on the outskirts of civilization, and these families the hardy pioneers who pushed far on into what they called "this desolate corner of the wilderness." Almost unbroken forests covered these hills and these vales, and over them and along these streams roved the wild Indians in pursuit of their game. This was part of the hunting-ground of the Mattabesett or Middletown Indians. For protection against these and the Tunxis or Farmington Indians on the west, the first settlers erected a fort, called Seymour Fort, the site of which was near the residence formerly occupied by Mr. John Goodrich, in Christian Lane.

The society of "Great Swamp" was organized in 1705. It was then called the Second Society of Farmington. It did not receive the name Kensington till 1722. Its territorial limits were probably nearly coincident with those of the present towns of Berlin and New Britain, extending, however, not so far to the east, and not taking in the northern part of New Britain, which still remained with the First Society of Farmington. Previous to 1722, the records of the society meetings sometimes ran thus: "At a meeting of the Second Society of Farmington, consisting part of Farmington, part of Wethersfield, and part of Middletown." Beckley Quarter, which was then a part of Wethersfield, and in 1712 was assigned to the new society in Wethersfield, since called Newington, was in 1715 annexed to the "Great Swamp Society." The inhabitants of that "quarter," in petitioning the General Assembly for the change, stated that some of them were "twice as near to the meeting-house in the south-east part of the town of Farmington" as to the place designated for the meeting-house in Wethersfield West Society. Their petition was granted on condition that they would help finish the meeting-house of the new society in Wethersfield and pay to that society the sum of fifty pounds. This they had already pledged themselves to do, and this they faithfully did; and so Beckley Quarter became a part of the Great Swamp Society, afterwards Kensington.

But we must go back a little. I have said the Second Society of Farmington, or Great Swamp Society, was organ-

ized in 1705. The church, then called the Second Church in Farmington, was organized on the 10th of December, 1712, with ten members, seven males and three females. There were then but fourteen families within the limits of the society, and these dwelt mostly on or near Christian Lane. Mr. William Burnham, a native of Ipswich, Mass., born 1684, and graduate of Harvard College, who had already preached to them for three years, was ordained the day the church was organized, and continued to act as their pastor till his death. His gravestone, in the burial-ground in Christian Lane, tells us that "having served his generation by the will of God he fell on sleep September 23d, 1750, in the 66th year of his age, and the 38th of his ministry." His residence was at what was lately known as the Norman Porter place. His house now stands opposite the almshouse. The society, by way of "settlement," built him a house (he "finding glass and nails"), and on condition that he remained their pastor for nine years secured to him, to his heirs and assigns forever, "three parcels of land," one of which, however, consisting of fifty acres, was given by the town of Farmington. His salary was fixed at £50 a year, supplemented by £5 worth of labor, for four years, and then to be raised to £65. He was, besides, to have "a sufficient supply of fire wood for family use, brought home and made fit for the fire." In 1715 the salary was made £70, and the society released from the obligation to furnish fire-wood. In 1722 it was made £80, and in 1728 £100. He is said to have "accumulated a large estate." He is described as a sound preacher, accustomed to refer much to Scripture in support of his doctrines. He was moderator of the General Association of Connecticut in 1738, showing that he was a man of some note among the ministers of the State.

The meeting-house in which he first preached was situated on Christian Lane, near the house lately occupied by Mr. Edward A. Deming. As the society increased in numbers, it was voted in January, 1729, forty-two in the affirmative and thirty-six in the negative, to build a new meeting-house. The spot designated was "on Sargt. John Norton's lot on the north side of Mill River," near the house lately occupied by Milo Hotchkiss, about one mile and a half west of the old meeting-

house. Serious difficulties arose respecting the location, and it was not till recourse had been had, in the most solemn matter, to the "lot," and an advisory council had been called to decide what the lot did not settle, and until finally the General Assembly of the colony had been appealed to, that the new house was erected. The lot fixed the site on the south-west corner of John Root's house-lot, across the highway northward from Rev. William Burnham's. The council decided that this was "the place that God in his providence points out to them to build their meeting-house upon," but they would not build it there. In May, 1732, the General Assembly appointed a committee to repair to the parish, view the circumstances, and fix the place for building the meeting-house. That committee fulfilled their trust, and fixed the site for the new house, and "pitched down a stake" in "Deacon Thomas Hart's home lot." The society refused to take any measures for erecting a house on that spot, and in October, 1732, the General Court "ordered directed and empowered the constable of the town of Farmington to assess and gather of the inhabitants of Kensington nine pence on the pound of the polls and rateable estate of said Society, and deliver it to the treasurer of the Colony, who was ordered and directed on the receipt thereof to pay out the same to Capt. John Marsh, Mr. James Church, and Capt. Thos. Seymour, all of Hartford, who were appointed and empowered to be a Committee, or any two of them, to erect and finish a meeting-house at the place aforesaid, for the Society aforesaid." This Hartford committee "speedily and effectually" performed their duty. They erected a house "60 feet in length, and 45 feet in breadth, containing in the whole about 1500 persons," in "Dea. Thomas Hart's home lot, on the north side of the highway, but adjoining thereto, and about one rod south of an apple-tree, partly dead." This house was not far from the corner, west of Mr. Cyrus Root's. The house now at the corner was probably Dea. Thomas Hart's. "A house capable of containing 1500 persons." How a house of those dimensions, sixty feet by forty-five, could be made to seat one thousand five hundred persons passes my comprehension. Our ancestors were making

large calculations. But be it remembered that it was expected that the families from all parts of Kensington, from Blew Hills, from Beckley Quarter, from what are now New Britain and Worthington, from Stony Swamp, would gather at that house of prayer. Well, the house is built, large enough to accommodate the people. But the end is not yet. The bitterness of feeling is not allayed. The people that live at a distance from the sanctuary on the north and the south, the east and the west, are not satisfied. The seeds of division into three societies are sown and will ripen by and by. Petitions to the General Assembly of the colony, praying for relief, come one after another from the north part of the parish, and from the south part of the parish, and from other distant parts of the parish, speaking of their "great difficulty to attend the public worship of God by reason of the length and badness of travel, especially at some seasons of the year." The General Assembly is humbly petitioned "once more to take the broken and divided circumstances of *poor* Kensington into their wise consideration, and if consistent with their wisdom appoint and authorize a judicious committee to come" and consider "what is best to be done for the best good of each quarter of said parish, or some other way prevent the confusion we are in danger of falling into." Verily, "poor Kensington" has already fallen into confusion that calls for the work of a *judicious* committee; and it is doubtful whether such a committee can do the needed work effectually. The great meeting-house, capable of containing one thousand five hundred persons, built by the authority of the General Court, near the old apple-tree in Dea. Thomas Hart's home lot, has rather increased than lessened the confusion of this poor parish. Nothing less than division will now cure it. In May, 1754, the first division was made by the organization of the parish of New Britain, and the church in New Britain was organized with sixty-eight members, fifty of whom were from the church in Kensington, on the 19th of April, 1758. On the same day, John Smalley, a name destined to be famous in the history of New England theology, was ordained, and continued sole pastor of the church till 1810, and senior pastor till his death in 1820.

But it is not for me to speak to-day of New Britain or its ministers. The new church in New Britain, as I have said, received fifty of its original members from the church in Kensington. There were, however, one hundred and seventy-four members left in a church which, forty-two years before, had been organized with ten members in a community consisting of but fourteen families. This shows that the increase of population must have been rather rapid. The forests had by this time many of them disappeared before the axe of the pioneer, and the rich farms in this most beautiful basin and along the slopes of these hills were already under cultivation.

After the death of Mr. Burnham, six years elapsed before the Kensington church settled another minister. During this time, the church was supplied by different preachers, among them Ezra Stiles, afterwards president of Yale College, and Elizur Goodrich, who only escaped being president of Yale College by casting his own vote, as a member of the corporation, for Dr. Stiles. At length, in 1756, the church in Kensington obtained as pastor the Rev. Samuel Clark, graduated at Princeton, 1751, who continued in that office till his death in 1775. His tombstone records that "in the gifts of preaching he was excellent, laborious, and pathetic."

The old society of Kensington has been divided, and part of those who are dissatisfied have gone. Will there not be peace now? Will not those who are left go quietly from Sabbath to Sabbath to worship at the meeting-house located and built for them by order of the General Court of the colony of Connecticut on Dea. Thomas Hart's home lot? Oh, no! It is as far as ever from "Blew Hills" to that meeting-house! Those who voted in 1730 "to build a new meeting-house on Sargt. John Norton's lot on the north side of Mill River" are not all dead yet, and those who have died have left the quarrel as an inheritance to their children. The controversy rages on with great bitterness, and becomes famous throughout the colony. At length the combatants become weary of a struggle in which neither party is likely to gain the victory, as neither will yield anything of what, in the heat of conflict, it regards as its rights.

On the records of this society there is a document, transcribed from the Kensington records, dated June 7, 1771, and signed by one hundred and thirty-seven individuals, which sets forth in its preamble "that the Society of Kensington, in the county of Hartford and Colony of Connecticut, has long been in a very unhappy, broken, and divided state, and that various means have been unsuccessfully used to reconcile the subsisting difficulties." The document then goes on to propose that the whole matter be submitted to the arbitration of Col. John Worthington, of Springfield, Col. Oliver Partridge, of Hatfield, and Mr. Eldad Taylor, of Westfield, in the province of Massachusetts Bay. These gentlemen were to judge whether or not it was expedient that the society be divided. If not, they were to fix upon the spot where a new meeting-house should be erected for the whole. If they judged a division necessary, they were to draw the boundary line between the two societies and select the sites for the new meeting-houses. In conclusion, the subscribers solemnly pledge themselves, "laying aside all former prejudices and prepossessions, and all party or selfish views and designs, to abide by the decision of the arbitrators, and not directly or indirectly to oppose it."

This pledge was made and kept in good faith. The arbitrators performed their part wisely. They decided that it was expedient to divide the society, drew the boundary line where it now runs, and selected as the sites of the new meeting-houses the spot now occupied by the Kensington church and that on which the old church of this society, now the Town Hall, stands. A memorial was presented to the General Assembly of the colony, which met at New Haven in October, 1772, declaring that it was "best and absolutely necessary for their mutual peace and real happiness, as well as from their limits, situation, extent, and wealth, and other respects, that the society of Kensington should be divided into two distinct ecclesiastical societies." An act was passed in accordance with this memorial. The West Society was to retain the old name of Kensington, and the East Society, in response to the prayer of the memorialists, received the name of Worthington, in grateful remembrance of the judicious efforts of

Colonel Worthington to settle the difficulties which had raged so violently.

Thus terminated this long and bitter controversy. In the sermon preached December 1, 1774, by Dr. Dana, of Wallingford, at the dedication of the new meeting-house in Kensington, I find the following sentences: "When you and your brethren of the other society could no longer meet with convenience to pay your common acknowledgments to the Hearer of prayer, you agreed to part in friendship. Had you separated on the like grounds as the Samaritans from the Jews, I should not have accepted your invitation to join you in setting apart this hour to implore the divine blessing upon your design. . . . In years past you have experienced the bitterness of contention. Time and opportunity have afforded conviction that the dissension, as usual, was about things of small moment. At the height of litigation in societies, the parties think, with Jonah, that they do well to be angry for the gourd. Allow them time to cool, and they think more justly. Let the remembrance of the wormwood and the gall be a caution to you, now that strife has ceased, to guard against any future occasion of it."

Thus we see that the brook flowing from the little spring opened sixty years before in this "desolate corner of the wilderness" has broadened and deepened, and divided into three streams which will flow on to beautify and to bless through all the coming ages. We have henceforth to trace the course, for a hundred years, of *one* of these streams. This society of Worthington held its first meeting on the 23d of November, 1772. At its second meeting, just one month later, the following vote was passed, viz.: "That the society will build a proper and suitable meeting house, as soon as conveniently may be, upon a spot where a stake is now set for that purpose, on the dividing line between the towns of Middletown and Wethersfield, near a maple tree a little east of the county road leading through the society." The town of Berlin, comprehending the three parishes of Kensington, New Britain, and Worthington, was not organized till 1785. The east line of Farmington ran not far from this street. We shall see whether the new meeting-house now to be built will fare any better than

that one built by order of the General Court forty years earlier, near the old apple-tree in Deacon Thomas Hart's home lot. At the same meeting at which it was determined to build a suitable meeting-house, the following, among other votes relative to this subject, was passed: "Voted, that for the enabling of their committee to proceed in building their house as aforesaid, a rate or tax of 6d. on the pound on the present list of ratable estate in this society be made, collected, and paid in money, wheat, rye, Indian corn, or flax-seed, at cash prices into the treasury." On the 23d of October, 1773, ten months later, it was voted that "a tax of 6d. on the pound be laid, collected, and paid in to Lieut. Roger Riley, treasurer, to be at the disposal of the committee for the purpose of building the meeting-house." And two months and a half later, on the 10th of January, 1774, another tax was laid, of a shilling on the pound on the list of ratable estate, to be paid by the first day of the following June. The amount of money thus raised and expended for the erection of the house was £750 7s. 0½d., or about \$2,500. But it was not till Thursday, October 13, 1774, that the house was ready to be opened for the public worship of God. During this interval the people of this society attended public worship with their brethren of Kensington at the old meeting-house, and bore their part of the expenses. I find no record of the dedication of the meeting-house at Worthington, but suppose it was dedicated with the appropriate solemnities on the day above named, — October 13, 1774. On the 19th of September, 1774, the society voted "to request the Rev. Mr. Clark to attend and preach a lecture at the opening of our new meeting-house." It is to be presumed that Mr. Clark did thus attend and preach a lecture, though I find no record, and can learn no tradition of it. It was not, however, yet complete. It stood without a steeple. Under date of January 18, 1790, more than fifteen years after the house was opened for public worship, I find the following record: "Whereas subscription papers are circulating in the parish for the purpose of erecting a steeple to our meeting-house, now voted that to said subscribers, with as many more as are willing to assist in so laudable a purpose, liberty is hereby granted to go on and build a decent and suitable steeple,

and join the same to the north end of our meeting house, at their own expense." At the same meeting a committee was appointed and a tax laid to purchase a bell. The house seems still to have been in an unfinished state, for on November 1, 1791, a tax of three pence three farthings on a pound was laid for the purpose of finishing it, and the sum of £130, or \$433 $\frac{1}{2}$, was voted to Solomon Dunham, Esq., for doing the work. Another vote passed at that meeting will interest some of you: "Voted that the thanks of this society be given to our friend, Mr. Jedediah Norton, for so distinguishing a mark of his good-will in giving us an elegant organ, and erecting it in the meeting-house at his expense, and we do hereby appoint Solomon Dunham, Esq., and Amos Hosford, a committee in behalf of this society to present this our thanks to said Mr. Norton; and liberty is hereby granted to the prudential committee to affix the said organ in the front gallery of our meeting-house." An organ was at that time a very rare accompaniment and help to the worship of God in Congregational churches. Many of us remember the sweet tones of this gift of Jedediah Norton in 1791. It was played with various skill till it was destroyed by fire in 1848. One or two items more will finish what I have to say about the old house. It was first warmed by a stove in 1826 — as much to the internal discomfort as to the external comfort of some sturdy opposers of innovation. In 1837 it was entirely remodelled, the pulpit removed from the east side to the north end of the house, the gallery lowered, and "slips" substituted for the old-fashioned square pews. During the night succeeding the 18th of October, 1848, it was set on fire by some incendiary. It was so far repaired that we worshipped in it until February, 1851, when we left it for this new sanctuary. It was thus occupied a little more than seventy-six years and four months for the public worship of God.

This church was organized by the Consociation of Hartford South, February 9, 1775. On that day thirty-eight brethren signed the following confession of faith and covenant (the whole number, male and female, of the original members of the church was ninety-five): —

"We believe that there is one only living and true God, the

almighty Maker and constant Preserver of heaven and earth, the rightful supreme Lord over all ; that in God there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are the same in substance, equal in power and glory ; and that the Scriptures are the word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice.

“ We believe that God made man at first upright, in a holy and happy state, but that all mankind, by their apostasy from and their rebellion against God, have exposed themselves to his wrath and curse, have fallen into a state of sin and misery, and are utterly unable to deliver and to save themselves. But God, out of the infinite riches of his free grace, sent his only begotten Son into the world to be a Saviour, to die, the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God ; and he hath graciously made a promise of eternal life and all the saving benefits of the Redeemer’s purchase, to all who truly repent of their sins and believe, rest, and rely on Christ for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel ; who at the last day, being raised from the dead, shall be adjudged to eternal life, but all others to everlasting punishment.

“ And we do now, as far as in us lies, make choice of the living God for our God, our sovereign Lord and Portion forever ; of God the Father for our God, of Christ the Son of God for our Saviour, and of the Holy Ghost for our Sanctifier and Comforter, and of the word of God for the rule of our belief and practice. And we do now openly and solemnly dedicate ourselves to God, to be wholly and forever his, to be guided by his Spirit, to be ruled by his laws, to be disposed of by his providence, and to be eternally saved in the gospel way, promising, by the assistance of the blessed Spirit, that we will live soberly, righteously, and godly all the days of our lives. And as the ordinary way of God’s conveying grace and the blessings of redemption to the souls of men is in and by his word and ordinances, we do now solemnly covenant and agree to walk together by this rule, to support and attend upon all the instituted ordinances of the gospel in this place, herein uniting and holding communion with each other, so long as God in his providence shall give us opportunity, submitting ourselves to a brotherly watch and to the discipline and gov-

ernment of the church established and regularly administered in this place, that so we may edify and build up one another unto eternal life."

It is noticeable that this creed, while strictly and carefully evangelical, is not sectarian. It contains nothing to which an evangelical Christian of any denomination, Arminian or Calvinist, could not assent.

This church, organized in 1775, remained without a pastor till the 3d of May, 1780, when the Rev. Nathan Fenn was ordained. His call by the society is dated December 28, 1779. The society, in case Mr. Fenn accepts their call, stipulate for themselves, their heirs and successors, to pay him, first, for his settlement the sum of three hundred pounds, in three equal annual instalments; second, for his annual salary, the first year one hundred and ten pounds, the second year one hundred and twenty pounds, the third year one hundred and thirty-five pounds, which was to continue his fixed salary; thirdly, in addition to these sums, twenty cords of wood annually the first three years, and twenty-three cords annually ever after. The wood, we see, is still abundant in these regions. These conditions were acceptable to Mr. Fenn; but the records show that, before he would consent to become the pastor of the church, there was a preliminary question to be settled respecting what was aptly enough called "the half-way covenant." A brief explanation of this phrase may be needful for some of my hearers. The churches of New England were at first strict in admitting members and in discipline, but in process of time a strong party arose who claimed that all baptized persons whose lives were not scandalous, should, on owning the covenant, professing their belief in an evangelical creed, and promising an outward and formal observance of religious duties, though without any pretensions to the inward experience of God's renewing grace, be recognized and treated as members of the church in all respects, except that they might not be admitted to the Lord's table. This innovation was strenuously resisted by some of the ablest ministers of New England; but it received the sanction of two synods convened in Boston in 1657 and 1662, and the practice after a while became general, and it was a century and a half before the evil

thus introduced was corrected. Previously to 1780 this church, like most of the surrounding churches, received members on this "half-way covenant;" that is, it had two classes of members, one class in full communion, who were regarded as renewed by the grace of God and partook of the Lord's Supper, and another class of moral men, who did not think themselves and whom no one else thought to be regenerated, but who were formally in covenant with God and his people, and, though not religious enough to come to the Lord's table, yet presented their children for baptism. Mr. Fenn — one of Dr. Smalley's pupils — refused to settle unless the practice was discontinued, and on the 8th of March, 1780, the church at his suggestion adopted a platform of discipline declaring that the half-way covenant had no foundation in Scripture, and that they would no longer receive members on that standing; and while those who had already been so admitted were to retain their privileges, the church pledged themselves to labor with them to bring them to such a state of mind that they could partake of the Lord's Supper. They were to have their children baptized, not, however, by Mr. Fenn himself, but by some neighboring minister who could do it without hurting his conscience.

The question, however, was not yet settled. Many members of the society felt themselves aggrieved by the action of the church. At length, on the 7th of May, 1801, the church, as a final measure of conciliation, adopted the following rule: "That every person admitted to the church should be of good moral character, with a competent knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, and should pass such an examination as is usual in the churches, and should be considered as being in full communion, and under the watch and discipline of the church; and that if any thus admitted should have scruples in respect to partaking of the Lord's Supper, they should be at liberty to absent themselves till their scruples should be removed, and they could come with freedom to this gospel feast." This seems to have settled the difficulty. Under cover of the indefinite phrase "shall pass such an examination as is usual in the churches," the church required of those whom it received credible evidence of piety, and the society silently acquiesced in the action of the church, probably be-

coming convinced of its propriety. The history of this warfare of more than twenty years between this church and society is substantially the history of the difficulties that prevailed in hundreds of congregations when the churches, convinced of the evils resulting from the "half-way covenant," determined to return to the primitive model.

Mr. Fenn, the first pastor of this church, was born at Milford, in this State, in 1750. He graduated at Yale College in 1775, and studied theology with Dr. Smalley in New Britain. When I became pastor here, there were at least nineteen persons living here who were members of this church before Mr. Fenn's death. They always described him as a man of peculiar excellence. The venerable Dr. Chapin used to speak of him in terms of the warmest affection. His uniform expression, when alluding to him, was — "Mr. Fenn was a *lovely* man." I have read several of his manuscript sermons. They are written with care, and discover sound sense, good judgment, warm affections, and ardent piety, rather than any peculiar strength or brilliancy of intellect.

He died after a ministry of nineteen years, on the 21st of April, 1799. Spring was showing the first loveliness of its scenery. "Raise me," said the dying man, "that I may look once more on the beauties of this world, before I leave it for a better." Amid the paroxysms of his pain he exclaimed, "How could I now prepare for heaven, if I had delayed preparation till this hour?" It was the night preceding the Lord's day when he died, and many of his people did not know that their pastor had passed into the glory to which he had tried to lead them, till they learned it on assembling for public worship. On Tuesday, they followed him to the grave with tears of unaffected grief. His tombstone tells us that "in his pastoral office he was faithful; in the duties of piety constant; in every relation kind and affectionate; and to all men hospitable and benevolent."

After Mr. Fenn's death, the church was without a pastor for more than three years. During this time, however, Rev. Isaac Lewis, afterwards Dr. Lewis, of Greenwich, and Mr. Andrew Gates, afterwards Dr. Gates, of East Hartford, were invited to the pastoral care of the church, and both declined.

But on the 14th of December, 1801, it was voted to call the Rev. Evan Johns; and at an adjourned meeting, the 29th of December, it was voted to pay Mr. Johns an annual salary of five hundred dollars and fifteen cords of good firewood. Wood, we perceive, is less abundant than it was twenty-one years ago, when Mr. Fenn was settled. The old forests, as we plainly see, are disappearing. Money, too, is no longer counted in pounds, shillings, and pence. The old custom, too, of giving a minister, as he begins his work, a sum of money "for his settlement" is, as we perceive, going out of use. There is another vote, passed at the meeting December 14, 1801, which is not without suggestions, — "The society's committee are directed to make suitable seats for the negroes."

Mr. Johns was installed June 9, 1802. He was a native of Wales, and for some time minister in Bury St. Edmunds, England. From his letter accepting the call I take the following characteristic sentences: "Allow me — unsuspected of flattery — to tell you that your conduct in wishing a foreigner to become your spiritual guide places the liberality of your character in the most advantageous light, and vindicates the people of Connecticut from the charge of narrow-mindedness and low-bred prejudices alleged against them by many who would overthrow the steady habits and the venerable usages transmitted to you from your forefathers. 'I was a stranger and ye took me in.' And I trust you will never repent of your measure. As in your choice you have not suffered yourselves to be restrained by any prejudices against foreigners, you may rest assured that you shall not be incommoded by any habits which I have acquired in a distant country. On the contrary, animated by a spirit truly American, it shall be my study to adopt your habits in all matters of indifference." He closes his letter thus: "Now will you join me in rendering a proper tribute of praise to the Almighty, who holds the winds in his fist, for protecting me and my family during a long voyage across the wide ocean, and in guiding me to a place where there is a fair prospect of public usefulness, and in praying for his future blessing on my ministerial labors, till I shall have finished my course and left behind me a character similar to that of my predecessor." This sounds

promising to one whose ear is not keen enough to detect its undertone. The hopes which it expresses were not realized. Mr. Johns was a very different man from Mr. Fenn. He had the stronger intellect and was the abler preacher, but he had also a more irascible temper and quicker impulses, and lacked that mildness of demeanor and that judiciousness of counsel and of conduct which had given his predecessor so strong a hold upon his people. He found it more difficult than he had anticipated to conform to the habits of a country parish in Connecticut. Besides, the prejudices of many of his people were at that time unreasonably strong against foreigners, especially natives of Great Britain. They had not lost the memory of that long struggle for freedom which had made with many Americans the word "British" the epitome of all that is evil. These prejudices slumbered at the time of Mr. Johns' settlement and during the season of his early popularity; but they were easily revived, and sometimes induced conduct which would have been irritating to the meekest of men, and to a man of Mr. Johns' temperament was intolerably provoking. Besides, he took an active and even a passionate part in the political strifes which during his residence here raged so violently throughout the nation. For these reasons, his ministry here was less successful than might have been expected from his superior abilities and his evident desire to be useful. The people, while they admired his talents, would make small allowance for his idiosyncrasies; and after a stormy ministry of nearly nine years he was dismissed, much to his own satisfaction and not less to that of the people, on the 13th of February, 1811. The council that dismissed him recommend him as a minister "possessing eminent talents natural and acquired, together with a high sense of integrity." After his dismissal Mr. Johns preached in various places, and at length retired to Canandaigua, N.Y., where he died at the advanced age of eighty-six, in 1849.

The church was not long destitute of a pastor. The Rev. Samuel Goodrich was called on the 7th and installed on the 29th of May, 1811. His salary was fixed at five hundred dollars per annum, without the addition of any firewood. He

was the third son of Dr. Elizur Goodrich, of Durham, one of the most distinguished divines in the State, and father of Rev. C. A. Goodrich, and Samuel Goodrich, known as Peter Parley. He graduated at Yale College, in 1783, and became pastor of the church in Ridgefield, in this State, July 6, 1786, where he labored with great success, and was highly esteemed as a judicious counsellor in all ecclesiastical difficulties, till the 22d of January, 1811, when he was dismissed at his own request.

Within about a year of his settlement here, this church enjoyed its first revival of religion. It may seem strange to some of you that its *first* revival should have occurred after it had been in existence for thirty-seven years. But the church had its origin during the struggles of the Revolutionary war. Mr. Fenn's earlier ministry was in just that period when the demoralizing influences that ever follow in the train of war were most powerfully felt, when the questions connected with the formation and adoption of the Federal Constitution were agitating the whole country, and when that series of religious revivals which since the year 1792 have so strikingly illustrated the grace of God had not yet commenced. That mighty wave of religious influence which made the last decade of the eighteenth century so memorable in the history of many of the churches of Connecticut did not reach this church. Mr. Fenn labored faithfully. When many around him regarded what they termed "night meetings" as a device of Satan, he attended such meetings with zeal; but though his efforts to "win souls" were not without effect, he was never permitted to rejoice in a general religious awakening among his people. The strifes prevailing here during the greater part of Mr. Johns' ministry account for the want of outpourings of the Spirit in that period.

Mr. Goodrich found a low state of piety in the church, and at once began to labor for a change. He had become familiar with those scenes of special mercy with which God was then visiting many of the churches, and knew by what means they were promoted. He instituted a weekly meeting for prayer, which still continues, and we trust will continue, the source of countless blessings till Christ's second coming. His preach-

ing was affectionate and solemn, and full of awakening truth. The sudden death of a young lady universally beloved was the means of bringing out the hidden feeling already struggling in many a bosom. I have heard my father-in-law, Rev. Charles A. Goodrich, speak of the scene at her funeral. He was then a young man, a student of theology, home on a visit. At the request of his father he addressed the youth who stood about the open grave, and while he was speaking the Spirit of God descended, and scores of minds were led to consider their relations to the God who was above them and the vast eternity that lay before them. During the year 1812, about sixty persons united with this church on profession of their faith. This was but the first of a series of revivals with which Mr. Goodrich's ministry in this church was blessed. In the year 1815, the church received twenty-five from the world; in 1818, thirteen; in 1821, forty-one; in 1822, eleven; in 1827 and 1828, fifty-two. When I became pastor here, I found many who regarded him as their spiritual father.

He was the sole pastor of this church about twenty years. As age drew on, many of his people thought that the interests of the congregation required the ministry of a younger man. It was at length determined to settle a colleague, and on the 15th of June, 1831, the Rev. Ambrose Edson was installed. In about three and a half years, both pastors were dismissed on account of failure of health. Mr. Goodrich, however, was able to preach for several months after his dismissal. He preached his last sermon with peculiar effectiveness, at Woodbury in this State, three weeks before his death.

His last illness was short, and his disease early affected his brain; but even in his delirium he was exhorting sinners to repent, and praying for their salvation. Not long before his death his reason returned, and he expressed his firm faith in Jesus. "My soul," he said, "is on the Rock of Ages, and my trust in God is firm as the everlasting mountains." He died Sabbath evening, April 19, 1835, in the seventy-third year of his age. "He possessed," said the Rev. Royal Robbins, "many excellent qualities as a man and a minister. His judgment was accurate, his understanding was solid rather than brilliant, and his knowledge seemed to lie in wide and

diversified surveys rather than concentrated to a point or derived from prolonged investigation of particular subjects. His sermons were plain and practical exhibitions of the truth. . . . He was listened to with pleasure by those who loved sound and wholesome doctrine and awakening representations, expressed in a cordial and affectionate manner and with his peculiarly full and solemn utterance."

Mr. Edson was born at Brimfield, Mass., December 10, 1797. He was a student for one year in the college at Princeton, N. J., and completed his theological studies at the seminary in that place in 1823. He was ordained in Brooklyn in this State, April 24, 1824, and continued pastor of the Congregational church there till December, 1830. He was a man of great zeal, earnest for the salvation of men, but showing, perhaps, some lack of that mental discipline and that power of continuous thought and study which would have resulted from a thorough collegiate course. When he exerted himself to elucidate and enforce his favorite topics, he had unusual power as a preacher. Man's ability and obligation to discharge his duty, and the high claims of God's moral government, were the themes on which he loved to dwell and which he would sometimes bring home to the sinner's conscience with great effect. The first year of his ministry here was marked by a season of unusual religious interest, as the fruit of which twenty-one united with this church. His health failed while he was here. After his dismissal in 1834, he removed with his family to Somers, where he died the believer's peaceful death, the 17th of August, 1835.

Since the dismissal of Mr. Edson, this church has had eight pastors. Of these all but one are yet living, and propriety forbids me to do more than give a few very general notices of them.

Mr. James M. McDonald was ordained here April 1, 1835. During the first year of his ministry there were thirty-eight additions to the church. He was dismissed, greatly to the grief of this people, on the 27th of November, 1837, and soon after was installed in New London. He afterwards became pastor of the Presbyterian church in Jamaica, L. I.; then of the 15th Street Presbyterian church in the city of New York;

and in 1853 of the First Presbyterian church in Princeton, N. J., where he is still [1875] fulfilling the work of the ministry.

Among those who united with the church while Mr. McDonald was pastor, there was one, now among the spirits of the just made perfect, whom some of you will thank me for recalling to your recollection. Lame, unable to walk without crutches, but moving swiftly and gracefully with them from her childhood, enduring constant and often exquisite pain, she seemed to have received the fulfilment of all the Beatitudes. By her writings, by her zealous labors, by her rare conversational powers, by her beautiful character, and above all by her life of faith and communion with God, and of cheerfulness and joy in the midst of suffering, she glorified God on the earth and finished the work that he gave her to do. Perhaps some of you will recognize in these few lines the likeness of Mrs. Sophia Goodrich Ashton.

The Rev. Joseph Whittlesey was installed over this church May 8, 1838, and dismissed on account of failing health August 9, 1841. During the first year of his ministry here fifteen, and during the last year fourteen, were added to this church by profession. He still resides here. His ministry here was short, but very fruitful. During the century of the history of this church, but five of its sons have entered the ministry, and two of these united with the church under Mr. Whittlesey. Let me briefly notice the five.

Hosea Beckley was born in this town in 1780; graduated at Yale College in 1803; was pastor in Dummerston, Vt., from 1808 to 1837; and died in 1843. He was a good and useful man.

George Dunham was born in this town, and joined this church by letter in 1822. His labors in the ministry were mostly at the South. At the beginning of the late war he was in Texas, but since that time all traces of him have been lost.

Simeon North was born in this town September 7, 1802, but left here when he was twelve years of age, and soon after united with the First Church in Middletown. He graduated at Yale, with the first honors of his class, in 1825. He was tutor at Yale from 1827 to 1829; from 1829 for ten years professor of Latin and Greek in Hamilton College at Clinton, N. Y.; and from 1839 for eighteen years president of that college. He is said

to have been "eminently successful as a college instructor, gaining his success by thoroughly mastering his subjects and keeping himself in close sympathy with his classes." He retired from the presidency of the college in 1857, and has since resided in Clinton.

Josiah W. North was born in this town in 1827; united with the church here in 1840, under Mr. Whittlesey's ministry; graduated at Hamilton College in 1848; was ordained an evangelist at New Haven in 1852; preached for two years at Geneseo, Ill., and then for two years at Como in the same State. In 1856 his health and reason gave way, and he has never recovered. We cannot but mourn over the sad mystery of hopes thus, and thus early, blighted.

Andrew T. Pratt was born in Black Rock, New York, in 1826, but came to Berlin to reside in childhood, and united with this church in September, 1838, during Mr. Whittlesey's ministry. He graduated at Yale in 1848; studied both medicine and theology; and was ordained missionary of the American Board at New Haven, August 8, 1852. His field of labor was in Asiatic Turkey—at Aintab, Aleppo, Antioch, Marash, where he was instructor in the theological seminary. In 1863 "his fine literary taste and thorough acquaintance with the Turkish language led to his call to take part in the revision of the Scriptures, and in other literary labors in Constantinople. His success in this new field of labor was all that had been anticipated," and his death in 1872, in the midst of his usefulness, at the early age of 46, caused a loss which was deeply felt. I remember him well in his youth and early manhood. When I came here he was a youth of sixteen, modest and retiring, and eminently conscientious. He recited Greek for a little while to me, and already gave promise of that accuracy of scholarship, especially in linguistic studies, for which he was distinguished in later life. His associates in the missionary field speak of the activity of his mind; the soundness of his judgment; his superior business talents; his high rank as a scholar, especially in the Turkish language; his extensive general information; the warm sympathies of his affectionate heart; the winsomeness of his manners; the excellence and power of his preach-

ing ; his fondness for music ; his poetic taste and talent ; the sweet hymns which he composed, or translated from English into Turkish, and which will be sung generation after generation while he is quietly sleeping in the dust. They call him "a model servant of the Lord in the two professions of a physician and a minister," and tell how earnestly he labored for the souls of men, and how they mourned his early death. Dear brother ! thy life's task was early finished, thou dost rest from thy labors and thy works do follow thee !

I remember well the day when the Rev. Dr. Taylor, my revered and beloved teacher in theology, called at my mother's house in New Haven and requested me to go up to Berlin and preach. My first sermon here was a preparatory lecture preached in the chapel the last day of the year 1841. I continued to preach here until the following April, when I received a call to settle, and on the 6th of July, 1842, I was ordained. Of all the ministers who belonged to the council that ordained me, only two, Rev. Dwight M. Seward, then just dismissed from the church in New Britain, and Rev. Joseph Whittlesey, my predecessor, are now among the living. Of that noble company of ministers, then laboring in this vicinity, I would like to speak, if there were time and this were the place ; but I must forbear. I continued to labor as your pastor till May, 1852, when I was dismissed, and soon after settled over the First Church of Waterbury, in this State ; thence after a ministry of nearly six years I went to Mansfield, Ohio ; thence to Springfield, Mass. ; thence to Plymouth ; thence to Painesville, Ohio ; thence to Belchertown, Mass. ; and thence to Grinnell, Iowa, where I have been laboring for the last five years.

There are a few things connected with my ministry here on which it may be proper for me to say a few words. If there was anything unkind, any failure of courtesy or of duty on the part of my people towards me, I do not remember it now. I remember how kindly they bore with my imperfections and my failings, how they attempted to strengthen me by their labors and their prayers, and especially I remember — oh, I shall never forget — how lovingly and helpfully they sympathized with me when I stood among them lonely and bereaved.

It was during the earlier years of my ministry here that the Rev. Charles A. Goodrich, then and for several years before a resident of this place and a member of this church, wrote and published his "Bible History of Prayer," probably the most useful of all his works. I have met the book in the families of Christians in different parts of New England, and far off on the prairies of the West. I have heard of its usefulness at missionary stations on the other side of the globe. We call up before us to-day the venerable form of the author, as he used to rise in our prayer-meetings to address us; and we listen again to the words, often eloquent, with which he thrilled us.

The year 1848 was a memorable year with us. It was a year of conflict between the friends of order and virtue on the one side and the wicked on the other. Attempts were made to enforce the laws of the State regulating the sale of intoxicating drinks. Some of you will remember what followed. I cannot pursue the painful story. Suffice it to say that on the night following the 18th of October, 1848, the series of outrages culminated. The house of God, built by the fathers now one hundred years ago, was set on fire by some incendiary — by whom was never legally ascertained. By great exertions the fire was extinguished; but the organ was destroyed, and the house left in a very damaged condition. The enemy was, for the moment, jubilant. Threats were uttered that, unless the friends of temperance stopped there, the village should be laid in ashes. The next Sabbath we met in the chapel, and the pastor tried to speak such words as befitted the occasion. The threats of the wicked ceased: the victory was on the side of the friends of virtue.

The question then came up whether we should repair the old house, or build a new one on a new site. It was at length concluded to build. This site was selected. The old Deacon Galpin house, which was then upon it, was drawn off, and this house erected. It was dedicated — the pastor preaching the sermon, and Dr. Tucker of Wethersfield leading in the prayer of dedication — February 26, 1851. It has been greatly altered since. It was then without galleries and finished to the ridge-pole, with very insufficient means for ventilation, in-

sufferably hot in summer and cold in winter, and echoing painfully the words of the speaker. It has been altered and improved till it has become what we see it to-day.

After my dismissal, the church was without a pastor for more than a year. Rev. William DeLoss Love, who had been a successful pastor in New Haven and New York, was installed October 5, 1853. The first year of his ministry here was marked by a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, as the fruit of which one hundred and fifty-five were added to the church by profession of faith. He was dismissed November 23, 1857, and became pastor of the Spring-street Church in Milwaukee, Wis., where he continued till July, 1871, when he removed to East Saginaw, Mich., where he now labors as pastor of the Congregational church in that city.

The next pastor was Rev. Robert C. Learned, my classmate in the seminary at New Haven. He had already been pastor in Twinsburg, Ohio, and in Canterbury, Conn. He was settled here December 1, 1858, and dismissed April 1, 1861. The following September he became pastor of the church in Plymouth, Conn., and was dismissed in July, 1865. After his dismissal he continued to reside in Plymouth till his death, April 19, 1867, at the age of forty-nine.

In 1862 he "had a fall over the banisters and struck on his head at the foot of the stairs." He preached for several years after this fall, but never fully recovered from its effects. When at last he felt death drawing near "there was no reluctance nor shrinking from the future, but just a quiet, beautiful preparation for going home." "His last words were of the preciousness of the Saviour."

Mr. Learned loved his work, and felt to the last that preaching Christ was the most blessed thing a man could do. He was a good man, loving and lovable, with well-rounded and well-balanced character. It was perhaps unfortunate, both for the happiness and the success of his ministry here, that, with his quiet and rather inactive temperament, he immediately succeeded a man of such stirring zeal as Mr. Love; and still more unfortunate that the state of his health prevented that amount of study and labor, and that bodily and mental activity, which to some of his people seemed desirable. He

was a man of no small intellectual power, and he often showed no little ingenuity in constructing his sermons. When I was pastor here he spent a Sabbath with me, and preached two discourses which I can recall to-day more distinctly than almost any other discourses which I heard so long ago. He was peculiarly lucid in his thinking and lucid in his expression of his thoughts. He was fond of historical research, and had he been living to-day he would have rejoiced in this gathering, and might have done well the work which I feel that I am doing imperfectly. But our time is passing, and we are coming in our survey too near the present moment for history. A few rapid lines must complete our sketch. Mr. Wilder Smith succeeded Mr. Learned. After a ministry here of almost five years he removed to Milwaukee, and thence after a ministry nearly as long to Rockford, Ill., where he is still laboring as a minister. The next pastor of this church, from 1867 to 1873, was Rev. Leavitt H. Halleck, who removed to West Winsted, where he is still a pastor. He was succeeded in 1873 by Rev. Jesse Brush, the present pastor.

I would like, if there were time, to speak of the Christian educators who have gone forth from the bosom of this church — of Mrs. Emma Willard and her sister Mrs. Almira Lincoln Phelps, never indeed members of this church, but natives of this village; of Simeon North, already mentioned as a minister, whose presidency of eighteen years was the longest and the most prosperous in the history of Hamilton College; of Edward North, who, chosen to the office when he was only twenty-four years of age, has now for almost thirty-two years been the beloved and successful Professor of Ancient Languages at the same college; of Julius N., Charles F., and Wedworth Dowd; of Ariel Parrish and others whose influence as teachers has been felt, for sound learning, for God and for goodness, far off and near; — but time will not allow.

Such, imperfectly sketched, has been the past. Great have been the changes since this church was formed. Could those who formed it have been told of what we see to-day; of the marvellous growth of their nation, which then in its feebleness was struggling for life; of these factories now at work on the ground with which they were familiar; of the railways and

telegraph lines that pass through this place, and that spread their marvellous network over this broad continent; could they have been told that at the close of one hundred years their posterity would meet to celebrate what they were then doing, and that one would come to speak to them, in but little more than two days' travel, from his home in the midst of comfort and civilization and culture and piety thirteen hundred miles westward and one hundred and twenty miles beyond the Father of Waters, and that his way from that distant point to this would lie through cultivated fields, and thriving villages, and opulent cities, the growth of a century in what was then a trackless wilderness — could they have believed the prophecy? Yes, there have been mighty changes! But one thing has not changed. The dear old Bible which they read has not changed. The cross on whose atoning blood they relied has not changed. The Saviour they trusted, the God they loved, have not changed. We accept to-day their confession of faith. We could adopt their words in covenanting with God. The next century, too, will bring its changes, perhaps more marvellous than the last. But God, Christ, the cross, the Bible, will remain unchanged. The men who then shall live may understand all these better than we, and love them more; but our God, our Saviour, our cross, our Bible, will be theirs. Brethren of the future, men and women of 1975, all hail! We send on to you our greetings. We reach across the intervening years to hand to you the blessings which our fathers transmitted to us, and which have gladdened the hearts of the Church of God through the toils and the struggles of eighteen centuries. Take them, use them well.

Brethren of to-day! We shall not live and labor long. Some of us already feel the chill of the coming sunset. We stand to-day amid the graves of the past. But we stand also amid the hopes and promises of the future. *We* shall die, but this *church will live*, — live, as we believe, through all the coming generations; and our influence will live in it long after we shall be forgotten. The men of the present are ever helping to make the future. Those who will be here one hundred years hence will be shaped in part by what we are

and what we do. Not in this church only, but in all the churches far and near in this broad land and in other lands, wherever her sons and her daughters may be scattered, will our power be felt on the men of the coming time. Be faithful, then. Trust in the God of our fathers, to whom, as in their days, so now and forever, be glory and dominion and power.

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